

Watering and Planting for the Glory of God

Series 1-15

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VerseQuest Ministries



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Introduction to the Series: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God

There are some subjects in the Christian life that sound simple at first, but the moment you begin to look at them through the light of Scripture, they open up into something far bigger than you first imagined. Watering and planting is one of those subjects. Most believers know the verse, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6), but many have never stopped long enough to really ask what that means in practical, doctrinal, and spiritual terms. What is planting? What is watering? How do they differ? How do they work together? Why did God choose those words? And why does the Holy Ghost go out of His way to make sure that after naming both kinds of labor, He still says that the increase comes from God alone? That is where this series begins. It begins with the understanding that ministry is real labor, holy labor, necessary labor, but it is never divine labor. Men plant. Men water. God gives life, growth, fruit, conviction, repentance, and increase. That truth alone is enough to humble the proud, stir the lazy, steady the discouraged, and re-center the whole church on the glory of God instead of the glory of man.

That is also why this series matters so much right now. We are living in a time when the church is badly out of balance on both sides. On one side you have the Laodicean prosperity crowd, celebrity preachers, platform builders, and polished religious salesmen who talk as if the successful Christian life is measured by money, comfort, expansion, influence, luxury, and visible abundance. They know how to talk about increase, but they do not mean the kind of increase Paul meant. They mean personal advancement. They mean mammon. They mean branding. They mean the enlargement of man, not the glorifying of God through the salvation of souls and the strengthening of saints. On the other side, you have people who may speak against that foolishness, but they can fall into another ditch where the work becomes mechanical, competitive, prideful, and obsessed with visible numbers, reports, and recognition. In both cases, the flesh finds a way to steal what belongs to God. One side boasts in wealth. The other side can boast in statistics. One side treats the church like a business. The other can treat souls like trophies. Both need to hear again that the field belongs to God, the seed is the Word of God, the laborer is only a servant, and the increase is something no man can manufacture.

So this series is being written to bring us back to the center. It is being written to show that watering and planting are not vague religious slogans, but real scriptural categories that explain the labor God has given His people in this present age. This series will show what it means to plant the seed of the Word, what it means to water what has been planted, why both are necessary, why different servants fulfill different functions in the same field, why prayer is woven into all of it, why perseverance matters when fruit is delayed, why the

patience of God in this age should make us urgent in the harvest, and why all faithful labor must be done for the glory of God and never for the exaltation of man. It will also show that we are not on this earth to build our own names, but to labor in the Lord's field until He comes. In other words, this is not just a series about ministry methods. It is a series about purpose, humility, faithfulness, endurance, burden for souls, and the absolute necessity of keeping God at the center of His own work. If this series does what it ought to do, it will not simply inform the mind. It will search the heart, expose the flesh, strengthen the laborer, and remind every reader that while the saints are called to plant and water, every true increase must still be laid at the feet of the Lord.

1 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – The Foundation of Faithful Labor

Main Passage: 1 Corinthians 3:6–7

Introduction

There are some verses in the Bible that can knock the starch out of a man if he will let them. First Corinthians 3:6–7 is one of them. Paul says, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6–7). There is enough truth in those two verses to wreck a celebrity preacher's brand, puncture a fleshly soul-winner's boasting, dry up a prosperity peddler's merchandise table, and shame a lazy Christian who has not lifted a finger for the Lord in six months. That passage puts every laborer where he belongs and puts God where He belongs. Men are servants. God is the giver. Men are workers. God is the life-giver. Men can sow and men can water, but they cannot create spiritual life any more than a scarecrow can raise a crop by staring at a field.

The trouble with religion in the last days is that it always goes off the road into one ditch or the other. One crowd takes the sovereignty of God and uses it as an excuse for sloth. They say, “Well, if God wants to save somebody, He'll save them,” and then they sit there like a bump on a pickle, never witnessing, never praying for souls, never teaching a class, never handing out a tract, never opening their Bible with anybody, and never weeping over the lost. Then another crowd comes along and turns ministry into a carnival of flesh. They talk as if revival can be manufactured with better lighting, stronger branding, fancier language, louder declarations, or more polished delivery. They act as if if they just say it enough, decree it enough, and market it enough, they can “bring increase.” The first crowd sins by neglect. The second crowd sins by arrogance. Both of them are wrong, and both of them are corrected by 1 Corinthians 3:6–7.

The opening study in this series has to lay the foundation right, or everything built on top of it will lean like a shack in a hurricane. That foundation is simple. There are three parts in the text: planting, watering, and God giving the increase. Those parts must stay in their proper order, or the whole thing collapses into confusion. Planting is the sowing of the truth. Watering is the nourishing and strengthening of what has been sown. The increase is the work of God alone, where He brings life, fruit, conviction, repentance, endurance, and growth according to His power and His will. If you mix those up, you will either sit still and call it faith, or you will get active and call yourself God. Neither one is Bible. The Bible says labor is real, labor is necessary, labor is commanded, but the miracle belongs to the Lord.

1. The Field Belongs to God

Before a man can understand planting and watering, he has to understand whose field he is standing in. Paul says, “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9). That means the field is not yours, the crop is not yours, the seed is not yours, and the glory is not yours. The whole operation belongs to God. The modern ministry machine has convinced men that they are building “their platform,” “their movement,” “their audience,” and “their influence.” That is not New Testament Christianity; that is spiritualized vanity. Paul was not building Paul Incorporated. Apollos was not launching Apollos Global. They were servants in a field that belonged to another Master. They were not the owners. They were hired hands, and the Owner was God.

That one truth would fix a mountain of nonsense if men would believe it. A man gets proud because he thinks the field belongs to him. He starts talking about “my people” and “my harvest” and “my increase” as if the saints were cattle with his brand burned into them. Another man gets discouraged because he thinks the whole burden depends on him. He acts as if the kingdom of God is a one-man operation that will collapse if he is not constantly seen and applauded. Both are wrong because both forget that the field is the Lord’s. “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof” (Psalm 24:1). The souls are His. The church is His. The gospel is His. The work is His. A laborer is only ever as safe as he remains conscious that he is serving on another Man’s property.

That should produce both humility and steadiness. Humility, because you are not the owner. Steadiness, because the burden is not ultimately yours to carry as if Providence were hanging by your threadbare nerves. When Jesus said, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few” (Matthew 9:37), He did not say the harvest belonged to the labourers. He called it “his harvest” in the next verse: “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:38). If it is His harvest, then He can send the laborers, bless the laborers, sustain the laborers, and bring the fruit. The servant’s first lesson is not how to shine, but whose field he is in.

2. Planting Is the Sowing of the Word

The first part of the labor is planting. If you want to know what that means, you do not have to guess, and you do not have to listen to some motivational speaker with shiny teeth and a helicopter sermon about “planting financial seeds.” The Lord already told you. “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). Planting, then, is the sowing of the Word of God into the hearts and minds of men. It is the initial communication of divine truth where that truth has not yet taken root. It is preaching the gospel to the lost. It is teaching foundational doctrine to babes in Christ. It is opening the Scriptures where ignorance has ruled. It is taking the truth of God and putting it where only darkness sat before. That is planting.

Paul could say, “I have planted” (1 Corinthians 3:6), because he came into Corinth preaching “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). He laid a foundation there through the gospel. He did not come in with philosophy, stage tricks, or a political action committee. He brought the message of the cross. That is how planting starts in the purest sense. A man hears that he is a sinner, hears that Christ died for his sins, was buried, and rose again, and that by faith in that gospel he can be saved. The seed goes in. That is planting. The same thing happens when a saint who is saved but unstable begins to receive foundational truth about doctrine, separation, prayer, Scripture, grace, judgment, and service. The Word goes in. That is planting too.

This is why modern religion is so confused. It has detached “planting” from the Bible and turned it into a slogan for ambition. To hear some preachers tell it, planting means giving money into their ministry so you can get a luxury car back from heaven’s vending machine. That is not planting; that is merchandised greed with Bible words stapled to it. Planting in Scripture is not about investing in your ego. It is about sowing divine truth. Peter said believers are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). There it is. The seed is the Word. If the Word is not being sown, then whatever else is happening, Bible planting is not.

3. Watering Is the Nourishing of the Truth

Once the seed is planted, it must be watered. That is the second part of the labor in 1 Corinthians 3:6. Paul says, “Apolllos watered.” That means Apollos came along after the seed had been sown and helped nourish, strengthen, and develop what God had already begun. He did not replace the seed. He did not change the field. He did not uproot the foundation to install his own. He watered what had been planted. Watering, spiritually speaking, is the repeated ministry of truth that helps what has already been sown to take root, grow, and bear fruit. It is doctrine taught again and again. It is correction, exhortation, instruction, comfort, warning, and strengthening.

A lot of Christians love the drama of planting and have no patience for watering. Planting gets the testimony. Watering gets the routine. Planting gets remembered as the moment. Watering is the hidden faithfulness afterward. But without watering, much of what is planted dries up in the hearer's neglect, confusion, shallowness, or temptation. That is why pastors, teachers, parents, and seasoned believers have such an important role. They are continually applying the Word, reinforcing the truth, reminding the saints, correcting false ideas, and encouraging obedience. Paul told the Ephesian elders, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). That is watering. He told Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). That is watering too.

The point is that watering is not optional cleanup work after the real ministry is done. It is real ministry. A convert who hears the gospel but never receives sound teaching is in danger. A church that hears a good message once but is never grounded in doctrine is in danger. A child taught one Bible story a month with no steady nourishment is in danger. Watering is the continued care of the truth after it has been sown. It includes prayer, patient teaching, personal example, and repeated exposure to the Word. It may not look spectacular to a crowd addicted to novelty, but it is one of the chief ways God matures saints. Apollos was not less important than Paul because he watered. He was necessary because he watered.

4. God Alone Gives the Increase

Here is the hinge on which the whole passage swings: "but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). If you do not get that part, you do not get the passage. Planting matters. Watering matters. But neither one can create life. A preacher can preach his lungs loose. A teacher can explain doctrine with perfect clarity. A soulwinner can plead with tears. A parent can pray for years. A church can labor faithfully in the Word. But none of them can make one dead sinner alive. None of them can force conviction into a stony heart. None of them can produce repentance by technique. None of them can manufacture spiritual growth by management. The increase is the part God does.

Paul drives it home even harder in the next verse: "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7). That does not mean the planter and the waterer are useless. It means they are nothing as the source of life. They are instruments, not causes. They are servants, not creators. They matter in their place, but their place is not God's place. That is what the modern church cannot stand. Men want to be "something." Paul says the planter is not anything in comparison to the God who gives increase. The waterer is not anything in comparison to

the God who gives increase. Put that on a green room wall at the next celebrity conference and watch the smiles tighten.

This is where prosperity preaching and charismatic presumption have really made a mess. Men talk about speaking things into existence as if they were junior creators with a verbal wand. They talk about “releasing” outcomes and “commanding” results as though Genesis 1 had deputized them to say, “Let there be...” over whatever car payment or ministry metric they wanted. But the power in Scripture is in God, not in man’s ego with a microphone. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6). Only God gives the increase. If increase comes, He gets the credit. If fruit appears, He did the decisive work. If a soul is born again, heaven moved, not human pride.

5. Faithful Labor Is Commanded, Not Optional

Now because God gives the increase, some people swing into passivity and call it reverence. They say, “Well, we can’t save anybody, so I’m just going to leave it all to God.” That sounds pious until you compare it with Scripture. Then it turns into disobedience in a church suit. Paul did not say, “God gives the increase, therefore I did nothing.” He said, “I have planted, Apollos watered” (1 Corinthians 3:6). There was labor. There was action. There was obedience. There was ministry. The same apostle who believed in God’s sovereign work also said, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16). He believed in God’s power, and that belief did not make him a spectator. It made him a laborer.

The Lord Jesus Christ never taught His disciples to sit around and wait for souls to fall into the kingdom like overripe apples. He told them, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). He told them to pray for laborers in the harvest (Matthew 9:38). Paul told Timothy to do “the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5). The Bible is saturated with commands to speak, teach, preach, warn, exhort, reprove, comfort, and bear witness. The believer is not saved by works, but he is “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Ephesians 2:10). The Christian life is not a hammock tied between two doctrines. It is a race to be run, a fight to be fought, a field to be worked, and a testimony to be borne.

That means if a man hides behind the sovereignty of God while refusing to labor, he is not being deep; he is being slothful. The Lord never uses the truth of His own power as an excuse for your idleness. He uses it as an encouragement for your obedience. Because God gives the increase, your labor is not meaningless. Because God gives the increase, you can sow in hope. Because God gives the increase, you can water in confidence. Because God gives the increase, you can keep working when results are slow. “And let us not be weary in

well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9). That is not a verse for loafers. That is a verse for laborers.

6. Fleshly Ministry Corrupts the Work

If one error is laziness, the other is fleshly self-exaltation. Corinth had both the gift and the disease of exalting men. One said, “I am of Paul”; another, “I am of Apollos” (1 Corinthians 3:4). In other words, they turned servants into banners and ministers into tribal mascots. Paul calls that carnality. It is still carnality today. Christians talk as if the Christian faith were a sports league and every big-name preacher had his own fan section. One man boasts in this conference circuit. Another boasts in that personality. Another boasts in his statistics. Another boasts in his “covering.” It is all flesh. It is babyhood with a pulpit attached to it. Paul will not allow it. He reduces the whole matter to laborers in a field under one God.

Fleshly ministry always has the same smell, even when it changes suits. Sometimes it smells like polished celebrity. Sometimes it smells like fundamentalist bragging. Sometimes it smells like prosperity greed. Sometimes it smells like doctrinal vanity. But it always has that same odor of man wanting credit for what belongs to God. A preacher starts thinking the response is because of his delivery. A church starts thinking the growth is because of its method. A soulwinner starts thinking the numbers are because of his skill. Then they begin measuring success by visibility, applause, money, or counts. The problem is not labor. The problem is taking God’s glory and repainting it with man’s name. “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31).

That is why this series must keep the phrase “for the glory of God” out front where it belongs. Planting for self-glory is corruption. Watering for self-glory is corruption. Building a reputation off visible fruit is corruption. Even telling true stories of converted souls can become corruption if the point is to polish your halo in front of an audience. Ministry becomes dangerous when the servant forgets he is a servant. John the Baptist had it right: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). That is the spirit of a true laborer. He is glad to be used, but he does not want the crown. He is thankful to serve, but he does not confuse that with being the source.

7. The Right Balance Produces Hope and Humility

When planting, watering, and increase are kept in their proper order, the Christian gets something very precious: hope without pride and humility without despair. Hope without pride, because the servant knows that God can bring fruit from faithful labor. That means he can keep sowing even when the soil looks hard. He can keep teaching even when the hearers seem dull. He can keep witnessing even when there is no instant result. He can

keep praying for prodigals, teaching children, feeding saints, and opening the Book because the decisive factor is not his brilliance but God's power. If the harvest depended on man, every serious worker would eventually break under the weight of it. But because God gives the increase, the laborer can endure in hope.

Humility without despair, because the servant knows that the increase is not his to command. That keeps him from vanity when fruit appears and keeps him from self-destruction when fruit delays. If someone gets saved, God gets the glory. If a church grows in truth, God gets the glory. If a backslider returns, God gets the glory. If a child comes to faith after years of teaching, God gets the glory. The laborer is glad, but he is not swollen. He rejoices, but he does not strut. On the other hand, when there is a season of little visible fruit, he does not immediately conclude that all labor was wasted. He remembers that the seed works invisibly, that roots grow before stalks show, and that "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

This is the balance missing from so much modern Christianity. Some men have zeal without humility. Others have doctrine without labor. Others have labor without dependence. Others have dependence without obedience. First Corinthians 3:6–7 ties it all together. Labor, yes. Faithfulness, yes. Action, yes. God-dependence, yes. Self-glory, no. Idleness, no. Pretending to create increase, no. The faithful servant says, "I will plant. I will water. I will pray. I will preach. I will teach. I will endure. But when anything lives, anything grows, anything bears fruit, I know exactly who did the miracle." That is the foundation of faithful labor.

Conclusion

The first lesson in this series has to be nailed down deep, because everything else will grow out of it. Planting is real. Watering is real. The increase is real. But they are not the same thing. Planting is the sowing of the Word of God. Watering is the continued nourishment of what has been sown. The increase is the divine work whereby God brings life, conviction, repentance, growth, and fruit according to His own power. The planter cannot generate life. The waterer cannot force growth. Only God can do that. That truth humbles the strong, rebukes the proud, exposes the lazy, and steadies the faithful. It is one of the cleanest ministry truths in the New Testament, and it cuts right across the grain of fleshly religion.

That means a believer has no business sitting idle under the excuse that "God is sovereign," and he has no business boasting as though visible fruit came from his own gifts, methods, or speech. He is called to work, but not to worship his own work. He is called to witness, but not to think witnessing makes him a creator. He is called to feed the saints, but not to imagine that his teaching is the hidden source of all life. The servant's place is honorable,

but it is still the servant's place. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed" (1 Corinthians 3:5). Ministers, not masters. Servants, not sovereigns. Laborers, not life-givers.

So if you want to begin this series right, begin there. Get in the field. Sow the Book. Water the truth. Pray for fruit. Refuse laziness. Refuse vanity. Refuse the circus of celebrity religion and the deadness of passive Christianity. Labor because God commands it. Hope because God is able. Endure because God is faithful. And when the Lord gives any increase at all—whether in a sinner saved, a saint strengthened, a child taught, a church helped, or a soul awakened—fall on the right side of the matter and give Him the glory. Because in the end, the seed was His, the field was His, the harvest was His, the power was His, and the increase was His all along.

2 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – What It Means to Plant the Seed

Main Passage: "The seed is the word of God." (Luke 8:11)

Introduction

There are some Bible words that men have worn slick with misuse, and "seed" is one of them. In this generation, if you let the average television preacher define it, a seed is your money sent to his ministry so he can buy another chandelier, another suit, another jet, or another excuse for fleecing a crowd of gullible people who should have known better. He will take a spiritual word, strip it from its context, run it through the cash register, and then smile at you like he just gave you the deep things of God. But the Lord Jesus Christ settled the matter in one line that any child can understand: "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). That means if you want to know what planting is, you do not start with a bank account, a business plan, a branding strategy, or a motivational slogan. You start with the Bible. Planting is not sprinkling your ambitions with religious language. Planting is the sowing of divine truth.

That is why the second essay in this series has to dig into the nature of planting itself. In the last study, we laid out the order of 1 Corinthians 3:6–7: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Now we move in closer to the first part of that labor. What exactly does it mean to plant the seed? Spiritually speaking, planting is the first placement of God's truth into the heart, mind, conscience, and understanding of a human being. It is the moment when the Word is brought where it was not before. It is the beginning of gospel contact. It is the start of doctrinal instruction. It is the initial sowing of truth into ignorance, darkness, rebellion, confusion, or indifference. Planting is not the whole ministry, but

without it nothing else begins. You cannot water what was never planted. You cannot harvest where no seed was sown.

The reason this truth matters so much is because every genuine work of God in a person starts with the Word entering that person's life. No one is born again by vibes. No one is converted by atmosphere. No one is saved by a clever church logo, a polished platform, or a preacher's cologne. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). If there is going to be conviction, repentance, salvation, growth, fruit, endurance, or obedience, the Word must go in. That is the seed. The modern church likes results, but it has lost respect for seed-sowing. It likes crowds, but it has lost confidence in the Book. It likes charisma, but it has forgotten that spiritual life begins with planted truth. So this study has to bring us back to first principles. If there is going to be any fruit for the glory of God, somebody somewhere has to plant the seed.

1. The Seed Is the Word of God

The first thing that has to be nailed down tighter than a coffin lid is the identity of the seed. The Lord said plainly, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). He did not say the seed is your money. He did not say the seed is your dream. He did not say the seed is your positive confession, your entrepreneurial instinct, your future promotion, or your belief in yourself. He said the seed is the Word of God. That settles the matter for anyone who believes a King James Bible. When a man plants spiritually, he is sowing Scripture, truth, doctrine, gospel, revelation from God. He is not inventing reality. He is not manufacturing possibility. He is not trying to turn heaven into a vending machine by inserting offerings and pressing buttons.

That truth cuts the legs out from under every religious salesman who uses "sowing seed" as a fundraising slogan. Those fellows are not handling the Word honestly. They know the phrase sounds biblical, so they borrow it, bleach it of its actual meaning, and then harness it to greed. But when Christ defined the seed, He defined planting with it. The seed is the Word. Therefore planting is the sowing of the Word. Peter agrees with that when he says believers are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). James agrees when he says, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). If a man is going to be spiritually affected by God, truth has to be communicated. The Word has to enter. That is how the life begins.

This also explains why the devil works so hard against the Bible itself. If the seed is the Word, then corrupt the seed and you corrupt the crop. Distract from the seed and you weaken the field. Replace the seed with entertainment and you starve the soul before it ever starts. That is why Satan does not mind religion as long as the Book gets sidelined. He

can live with churches full of activity if the seed is missing. He can tolerate inspiration, enthusiasm, and emotional motion as long as the Word is not planted plainly and powerfully. A church can have music, lights, branding, podcasts, and personality, and still be barren if the seed is absent. The life is in the seed because the life is in the Word.

2. Planting Begins Where Truth Has Not Yet Taken Root

Planting, by its very nature, is initial work. It is beginning work. It is first-contact work. When Paul says, “I have planted” (1 Corinthians 3:6), he is speaking of the first sowing of truth in Corinth. He was the one who came preaching Christ crucified and laid the foundation. He put the seed in the ground. That is what planting is in spiritual terms. It is the first bringing of God’s truth into a person’s hearing, understanding, conscience, and inward man. That may happen through public preaching, a private conversation, a tract handed out on a street corner, a Bible lesson in a living room, or a parent opening Scripture to a child at the kitchen table. In each case, truth is entering where it has not yet taken root. The soil is being sown.

That means planting is not always dramatic. Sometimes Christians think the only real planting is a thunderstorm sermon in a packed auditorium with tears and trembling. But planting can happen in small ways that heaven notices even when earth forgets them. A verse quoted at the right moment is planting. A clear gospel witness to a coworker is planting. A Bible placed in someone’s hand is planting. A teacher explaining salvation to a child is planting. A faithful saint mailing Scripture to someone who would never enter a church building is planting. The world wants spectacular moments. God often works through simple obedience. The seed does not care whether it enters the ground with fireworks or quiet faithfulness. It just has to get in there.

That is why planting requires discernment and patience. The sower is not called to create the soil, only to sow into it. Some ground is hard. Some is shallow. Some is crowded with thorns. Some is good. But the responsibility of the sower remains. The Lord said in the parable of the sower that the seed fell by the wayside, on stony places, among thorns, and into good ground (Matthew 13:3–8). The varieties of response did not change the identity of the seed. The seed stayed the same. So the Christian laborer does not sit around waiting for guaranteed good ground before he opens his mouth. He plants because planting is his work. He leaves the hidden transformation of the soil and the increase of the crop to God.

3. Planting Is Gospel Preaching and Personal Witnessing

At the center of all spiritual planting is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nothing is more fundamental than that. Paul told the Corinthians the gospel he had preached unto them: “how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and

that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). That is the seed in its saving form. When a lost sinner hears that he is guilty before God, that Jesus Christ shed His blood for sin, was buried, and rose again, and that salvation is by grace through faith in that finished work, the seed is being planted. That is not motivational speaking. That is not therapeutic spirituality. That is not religion trying to polish human nature. That is gospel sowing.

That is why evangelism matters so much. It is not optional decoration for the church. It is seed-work. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). That command did not expire because modern Christians got busy curating their image. The Great Commission is still in the Book. The Lord still wants the gospel preached. Souls are still lost. Hell is still hot. Christ is still the only Saviour. Faith still comes by hearing the Word of God. A church that loses its evangelistic burden loses one of the chief ways the seed gets planted. A believer who never speaks the gospel is refusing one of the plainest forms of sowing the Lord has assigned.

But planting is not limited to pulpits. Personal witnessing is planting too. Philip preached Christ unto the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, beginning at Isaiah 53, and the man believed. That was planting. The woman at the well heard Christ speak truth to her conscience, then ran and told the men of the city, “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did” (John 4:29). That became planting through testimony. Andrew found his brother Simon and said, “We have found the Messias” (John 1:41). That was planting. A Christian does not have to own a pulpit to own a responsibility. Any believer who carries the truth of God into a life where it was not rooted before is doing seed-work.

4. Planting Includes Doctrinal Teaching and Biblical Instruction

Now if planting were only preaching the gospel to the lost, some believers might think they are exempt because they are not evangelists. But the Bible shows that planting includes more than the initial call to salvation. It includes laying down foundational truth where ignorance still reigns. Paul did not merely get people converted and then vanish like a magician after the applause. He grounded churches in doctrine. He taught them about Christ, the church, grace, resurrection, judgment, ordinances, gifts, conduct, holiness, and hope. He was planting truth in areas of life and thought where truth had not yet taken root. That is why he could call himself “a wise masterbuilder” who laid a foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10). Foundational doctrinal teaching is part of seed-sowing.

That means Sunday school teachers plant. Parents plant. Pastors plant. Missionaries plant. Bible study leaders plant. A mother teaching her children Genesis, the fall, the cross, and the resurrection is planting. A father opening Ephesians and teaching his home what

grace means is planting. A pastor correcting false doctrine from the pulpit and laying down sound teaching line upon line is planting. A missionary translating Scripture and teaching a people the first principles of the faith is planting. A believer handing a new convert the right passages on assurance, prayer, baptism, and the local church is planting. It is still the sowing of truth where that truth was not rooted before.

This is one reason shallow churches produce shallow Christians. If the only thing a church knows how to do is create emotional moments, it may excite people without ever planting much of anything. But spiritual life requires seed. The writer of Hebrews rebuked believers because when they should have been teachers, they still needed to be taught “which be the first principles of the oracles of God” (Hebrews 5:12). In other words, the seed of foundational truth had not been adequately laid and established. Doctrinal weakness is often a planting problem. Where sound instruction has not been sown, confusion grows naturally. Error grows easily in fields where truth was never planted deeply.

5. Planting Is Scripture Distribution and Any Faithful Bringing of Truth

Sometimes Christians limit ministry to whatever happens in a church service, but the Lord’s field is bigger than a church building. The seed can be planted anywhere the Word of God is brought to bear. That includes Scripture distribution in all its forms. When a man hands out a gospel tract with Bible truth on it, he is planting. When a woman mails a card with Scripture to someone in trouble, she is planting. When a believer leaves a Bible in the hands of someone who has none, he is planting. When translated Scripture reaches a people in their own tongue for the first time, that is massive seed-work. The power is not in the paper and ink by themselves, but in the truth conveyed. “My word... shall not return unto me void” (Isaiah 55:11).

That is one reason Bible printing, Bible distribution, and Scripture-centered publishing matter so much. Men may not think of those works as “front-line ministry,” but if the seed is the Word, then getting the Word into people’s lives is central labor. Some men go. Some men preach. Some men teach. Some men print. Some men mail. Some men support the work that gets the Scriptures where they are not. It is all connected to seed-sowing when done in truth and for God’s glory. The devil hates a Bible in a sinner’s hand for the same reason he hates a preacher in a pulpit: the seed is dangerous to his kingdom.

That also means you do not have to romanticize planting for it to count. A Christian who faithfully posts Scripture online is planting. A saint who answers a doctrinal question with Bible truth rather than opinion is planting. A believer who sends a verse to strengthen a weak brother is planting. A missionary who reads the Word aloud to someone who cannot yet read is planting. The form may vary, but the principle stays the same. Planting is any

faithful effort to bring the truth of God where it has not yet taken root. The labor may look small to men, but heaven measures differently. A single verse planted in a conscience can do more eternal work than ten thousand polished speeches full of nothing.

6. Planting Is Not a Slogan for Worldly Ambition

Now here is where this study has to get a little mean in the right direction, because modern religious language is full of thieves. They steal Bible words and use them to market flesh. One of the biggest crimes in church culture has been taking “seed” and “sowing” and turning them into buzzwords for money, promotion, influence, and self-advancement. Suddenly planting is not preaching Christ to sinners. It is “sowing into your future.” It is “planting into your destiny.” It is “releasing your next level.” It is all polished nonsense, and most of it has one hand in your wallet while it is talking. That is not Bible planting. That is covetousness with a microphone.

The Lord never defined seed that way. He said, “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). Paul never used 1 Corinthians 3 to tell believers to invest in their lifestyle. He used it to humble ministers and elevate God. The whole prosperity racket depends on changing the meaning of the terms while pretending to honor the text. Once they do that, they can make “planting” mean whatever they want. But Scripture will not let them get away with it if you keep reading. The seed is the Word. Planting is sowing truth. Fruit is spiritual fruit. Increase is God’s work. The field is God’s field. That has nothing to do with creating a luxury-centered definition of the successful Christian.

This needs to be said plainly because a lot of believers have been trained to think in mammon terms even if they reject the worst prosperity preachers. They still measure blessing by outward accumulation. They still imagine increase means bigger accounts, nicer possessions, more visibility, and broader applause. But the New Testament puts its emphasis elsewhere. Spiritual fruit is souls saved, saints strengthened, truth established, obedience produced, and Christ magnified. Planting is tied to that world, not to worldly ambition. The Christian is not called to sow the Word so he can build an image. He is called to sow the Word so God may be glorified in the salvation of the lost and the edification of the saints.

7. Every True Beginning of Fruit Starts with the Seed

At bottom, all this comes down to a very simple but very neglected truth: there is no genuine spiritual fruit without prior seed. You cannot have a harvest where nothing was sown. That is so obvious in agriculture that even a city slicker knows it, but in religion men act as though results can be detached from truth. They want transformed lives without biblical preaching. They want spiritual maturity without doctrinal instruction. They want

repentance without Scripture. They want growth without planted seed. It will not happen. The Lord designed His work so that life begins through truth entering the heart. “Being born again... by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). “Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21). The seed has to go in.

That means if a church wants lasting fruit, it must become serious about sowing the Book. It must preach the gospel clearly. It must teach doctrine patiently. It must distribute Scripture faithfully. It must witness personally. It must refuse the temptation to replace seed with spectacle. Some men would rather entertain a crowd than plant one solid verse in a conscience. Others would rather build excitement than build roots. But roots do not grow on excitement alone. The Word has to enter, lodge, and begin its hidden work. Even where the increase belongs entirely to God, He has ordained that it comes through the means of His truth being sown. The miracle does not cancel the seed; it honors the seed.

That truth should encourage every faithful laborer who sometimes feels small. If you plant the Word, you are doing first-rate kingdom work. You may not see the root immediately. You may not see the blade. You may not live to see the full ear in the corn. But if the seed of truth has gone in, something serious has happened. A conscience has been touched. A thought has been challenged. A sinner has been confronted. A saint has been strengthened. A child has been marked. A field has been sown. God alone gives the increase, but He has been pleased to begin His work with planted seed. So never despise that labor. In the whole process of spiritual fruit, the first human act of obedience is often this simple, this humble, and this powerful: somebody planted the Word.

Conclusion

Planting the seed is not mysterious once you let the Bible define its own terms. The seed is the Word of God. Therefore planting is the initial sowing of God’s truth into the hearts and minds of men. It begins where truth has not yet taken root. It includes gospel preaching, personal witnessing, doctrinal teaching, Scripture distribution, and every faithful act that brings the Word of God to bear on a soul. It is beginning-work, foundation-work, first-contact work. It is not the whole of ministry, but it is where ministry starts. No plant ever grew where no seed was sown, and no genuine spiritual fruit ever appeared where the truth of God was absent.

That means the Christian must recover respect for seed-sowing. The church has been hypnotized by bigger, louder, shinier things, but heaven still works through the Book. Men may praise personality, but God blesses truth. Men may chase technique, but the Lord has tied life to His Word. The laborer is not called to impress the field. He is called to sow in the field. He is not called to invent the seed, improve the seed, or substitute something more

fashionable for the seed. He is called to plant what God gave him to plant. Once the Word enters, the Lord can do what no man can do. But if the Word is never planted, the rest is all empty motion.

So the charge in this essay is plain. Plant the Book. Plant the gospel. Plant doctrine. Plant truth in your children, in your church, in your conversations, in your witness, in your ministry, and in every open door God gives you. Do not let thieves redefine planting into a slogan for greed. Do not let lazy religion reduce ministry to observation. Do not let modern church culture talk you out of the power of seed-sowing. Every true beginning of spiritual fruit starts when the truth of God gets planted somewhere it was not before. That is what it means to plant the seed, and that kind of labor, done faithfully and humbly, is for the glory of God.

3 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – What It Means to Water the Seed

Main Passage: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:6)

Introduction

There are Christians who love the front edge of ministry but have no stomach for the follow-through. They get excited about the first conversation, the first sermon, the first response, the first visible movement, and the first burst of energy, but once the seed is in the ground, they act as though the whole job is finished. That is one reason so much modern Christianity is thin, shallow, unstable, and easily blown around by every gust of foolishness that comes through town. Somebody planted, but hardly anybody stayed long enough to water. Paul did not say, “I have planted, and that was enough.” He said, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6). That means God Himself saw fit to distinguish between the first sowing of the truth and the continued nourishing of that truth afterward. In other words, the Lord did not design spiritual life to run on one dramatic moment alone. He ordained ongoing ministry.

That is a truth this generation badly needs because the church has become addicted to novelty. It loves announcements, launches, testimonies, conferences, “big days,” and all the visible excitement that comes with first contact. But real spiritual growth is usually not noisy. It is often slow, hidden, repeated, and patient. It comes through hearing the truth again, being reminded of the truth, being corrected by the truth, being strengthened by the truth, being comforted by the truth, and being pressed forward by the truth over time. That is watering. It is not glamorous to the flesh because the flesh likes flash. Watering is usually

the kind of labor that happens after the spotlight moves on. But without it, what was planted may remain stunted, confused, or vulnerable. There is a reason Apollos is mentioned right beside Paul in 1 Corinthians 3. The man who waters is not an afterthought. He is part of the work God ordained.

This essay has to make that plain. If planting is the sowing of the Word where it has not yet taken root, then watering is the continued ministry of nourishing that Word after it has been received. Watering includes teaching, exhortation, correction, encouragement, discipleship, and prayerful reinforcement of truth already heard. It includes staying with souls after the first contact, helping them understand what has been said, grounding them in doctrine, warning them against error, and strengthening them to continue. It is often quieter, slower, and less celebrated than planting, but it is no less necessary. The field of God does not just need sowers; it needs waterers. A seed dropped into dry ground and left alone is not the picture Paul gives. He gives a picture of labor that continues, care that remains, and ministry that helps what has begun move toward growth. That is what it means to water the seed.

1. Watering Is the Continued Ministry of Nourishment

When Paul says, “Apollos watered” (1 Corinthians 3:6), he is describing more than a one-time gesture. He is speaking of ongoing nourishment. If planting is the initial sowing of divine truth, watering is what happens after that truth has been introduced. It is the continued care of the seed through repeated ministry. It is the truth being brought again and again to bear upon the hearer so that what was sown does not remain dry, neglected, misunderstood, or choked. Watering is the strengthening side of ministry. It is not the beginning of contact so much as the continuation of care. It is what helps roots go down rather than leaving the seed lying there with no sustaining nourishment.

This matters because the spiritual life is not built on a single burst of exposure. A sinner may hear the gospel once and be saved on the spot, but he will still need watering. A believer may receive one strong doctrinal truth and rejoice in it, but he will still need watering. A church may hear a clear sermon that convicts, but if there is no follow-up ministry, the impact may fade into memory without maturing into strength. Watering is what keeps the truth present. It keeps the mind engaged with Scripture. It keeps the conscience tender under the Word. It keeps the heart from hardening through neglect. Just as a plant cannot thrive on being planted alone, a soul does not grow merely because the first seed has gone in.

That is why the Bible so often emphasizes continuance. The early believers in Acts “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread,

and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). There is watering in that word “continued.” Paul told Timothy to “give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:13). There is watering in that kind of repeated ministry. He told the Colossians to be “rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith” (Colossians 2:7). Roots do not deepen in a moment of excitement. They deepen through continued nourishment. Watering is the labor that helps what has begun move toward stability.

2. Watering Includes Teaching the Truth Again and Again

One of the main ways the seed is watered is by repeated teaching. A great many believers make the mistake of assuming that once a truth has been stated once, it no longer needs to be revisited. That is not how human beings work, and it is not how the New Testament ministers. Peter said, “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them” (2 Peter 1:12). There is watering right there. He was not ashamed to repeat what his readers had already heard because hearing the truth again is part of how God establishes the heart. The flesh gets bored with repetition because the flesh loves novelty. But souls are strengthened by the repeated application of the same divine truth.

That is why pastors and teachers who faithfully revisit foundational doctrine are not wasting time. They are watering. When grace is taught again, believers are watered. When sound teaching on salvation is reinforced again, believers are watered. When Christ’s person, Christ’s work, prayer, holiness, the local church, judgment, and hope are revisited again, believers are watered. The modern church often mistakes freshness for depth. It wants every sermon to sound like something nobody has ever heard before. But one of the marks of healthy ministry is not constant novelty. It is faithful reinforcement. Paul told the Philippians, “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Philippians 3:1). Safety often lies in repeated truth.

This is especially important because error is persistent. False doctrine does not take a day off. The devil does not stop sowing confusion because a church heard one good message last spring. That means the truth must keep being taught, pressed, and reinforced. A church fed on occasional inspiration but deprived of steady doctrine will become vulnerable. A Christian who only lives off emotional highs and never receives repeated biblical teaching will remain unstable. Watering is one of the Lord’s provisions against that kind of spiritual weakness. The truth is not merely announced and then abandoned. It is taught, retaught, clarified, reinforced, and applied until it sinks deep enough to become part of the believer’s life.

3. Watering Includes Exhortation, Correction, and Encouragement

Watering is not just teaching in the formal sense. It also includes exhortation, correction, and encouragement. Truth has to be applied, not merely stated. Paul told Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). That is watering work. It is ministry that takes the truth already planted and brings it home to the life, the conduct, the thinking, and the direction of the hearer. Sometimes that means encouraging the weary. Sometimes it means rebuking the careless. Sometimes it means correcting false thinking before it grows stronger. All of that is part of nourishing the seed after it has been sown.

A believer who has received truth still needs help living in the light of it. He may know something is true and yet need exhortation to walk in it. He may have heard sound doctrine and yet drift in practice without correction. He may understand the gospel and yet become discouraged in service without encouragement. Watering deals with those realities. It keeps truth from remaining a bare idea floating above life. It presses the truth into obedience. It reminds the believer what God said and why it matters today. It comes alongside the weak, the distracted, the wounded, and the immature and keeps bringing the Word to bear until the soul is strengthened.

That is why so much watering goes unnoticed by the public but is precious in the sight of God. A quiet word at the right time can be watering. A correction given with patience can be watering. A phone call that reminds a discouraged saint of God’s promises can be watering. A sermon that confronts compromise and restores seriousness can be watering. A timely exhortation not to quit, not to drift, not to harden the heart, not to abandon the Book, can be watering. The flesh likes things it can count and display. But heaven sees the secret strengthening work that keeps saints going. That is no small labor. It is one of the ways God sustains His people.

4. Watering Is Discipleship, Not Just a Moment of Decision

One of the great problems in modern church culture is the obsession with decisions without discipleship. Men love the visible moment because the visible moment can be reported. It can be counted, posted, celebrated, and packaged. But spiritual life is not proven by a moment alone. It must be nurtured, instructed, and strengthened. That is where watering comes in. The Lord Jesus did not merely tell His disciples to make converts. He said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations... Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20). There is more than planting in that commission. There is watering through teaching and ongoing formation.

A new believer especially needs watering. He needs to understand what has happened in salvation, what the Bible teaches, how to pray, how to read Scripture, how to resist

temptation, what the local church is for, what false doctrine looks like, and how to begin walking with the Lord. If he is left to himself after the first contact, he may remain confused, vulnerable, and spiritually malnourished. The seed may be there, but it needs care. The same thing is true for those who have been in church for years but remain underdeveloped because no one ever invested the patient, repeated labor of discipleship into them. Watering is not merely for brand-new converts. It is for everyone who needs strengthening in truth.

This is one reason spiritual growth is often slower than flesh wants it to be. Discipleship is not usually dramatic. It takes time, repetition, questions, mistakes, corrections, reminders, and prayer. It takes someone opening the Book again and again. It takes someone walking alongside another believer long enough to help root the truth deeply. Paul did that with Timothy. Priscilla and Aquila did that with Apollos himself, explaining “the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26). That was watering. They did not despise the man because he needed further instruction. They strengthened him. Real ministry is not finished when the first response happens. Often the slower work that follows is where the strength is built.

5. Watering Is Often Quieter and Less Celebrated Than Planting

The flesh loves what can be seen immediately. It loves the first breakthrough, the initial story, the public response, the dramatic testimony. That is why planting often gets more attention than watering. The planter may be remembered because he was there at the visible beginning. But the waterer usually does much of his labor after the excitement has settled down. He is there in the repetition, the reinforcement, the patient instruction, and the long obedience. He may never get the attention the planter gets. But heaven is not confused about what matters. Paul mentions Apollos by name in 1 Corinthians 3 because the Lord wanted it on record that watering is not second-rate ministry.

This should correct a lot of foolish ambition in Christian work. Some believers want only the front-end labor that comes with visible energy. They want to be in at the beginning, where the story is exciting and the testimony is fresh. But they have no patience for the slower work of strengthening, teaching, and continuing. Others feel as though their ministry is less important because it is not public, dramatic, or easy to report. But if what they are doing is nourishing the truth in souls, then they are watering, and watering is necessary. A parent steadily opening the Scriptures to children over years is watering. A pastor teaching week after week is watering. A faithful believer who keeps helping others understand the Bible is watering. None of that is small.

You can see this principle in agriculture itself. The man who throws the seed may get the first action, but if no moisture follows, the whole thing remains barren. So in the spiritual

life, the beginning is not everything. The Lord does not only care that truth enters; He cares that truth grows. That means the less celebrated labor may be the very thing keeping the plant alive. Many believers owe more of their stability to years of quiet watering than they do to one spectacular moment from the past. The flesh may celebrate the launch, but God values the faithful care that keeps the roots alive afterward.

6. Watering Requires Patience, Prayer, and Persistence

Because watering is ongoing ministry, it requires patience. The waterer cannot demand instant maturity any more than the planter can demand instant life. He works with the understanding that growth often takes time. Paul said, “Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one” (1 Corinthians 3:8), but being one in purpose does not mean everything happens at once. The field takes time. The soul takes time. The understanding takes time. The shaping of character, conviction, and endurance takes time. That is why so much of watering involves bearing with weakness without surrendering truth. It means staying with the work long enough for the repeated ministry of the Word to have its effect.

Prayer belongs to watering because no amount of instruction by itself can produce the increase. The waterer is not merely pouring information into a mind. He is ministering truth while depending on God to make it effective. Paul prayed for believers constantly, that they might be filled with the knowledge of God’s will, strengthened with might, rooted and grounded in love, and established in the faith. Those prayers are part of watering. A parent praying over a child while teaching Scripture is watering. A pastor praying for the flock before and after preaching is watering. A believer praying that another saint will truly grasp and obey what God has said is watering. Watering is not mechanical repetition. It is prayerful nourishment.

Persistence also belongs here, because the waterer has to keep going when growth is not immediately visible. He may answer the same kind of question more than once. He may revisit the same doctrine repeatedly. He may encourage the same person through repeated discouragement. He may not see visible fruit for a long time. But that does not make the work useless. It makes the work real. Paul told the Thessalonians to “comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men” (1 Thessalonians 5:14). That is watering language. Spiritual growth does not happen through irritation, impatience, or the demand for instant polish. It happens through truth steadily applied over time under the blessing of God.

7. Spiritual Growth Requires More Than One Dramatic Moment

The church has a bad habit of mistaking the beginning of a thing for the maturity of a thing. One moving service, one emotional prayer, one strong sermon, one burst of conviction, or

one public response gets treated as though the whole matter were finished. But spiritual growth requires more than one dramatic moment. The seed may go in suddenly, and sometimes God does remarkable work in an instant, but the life that follows requires nourishment. The Bible speaks of babes, young men, and fathers in 1 John 2:12–14. That tells you growth has stages. Paul told the Corinthians, “I have fed you with milk, and not with meat” (1 Corinthians 3:2). Feeding is watering language. He was continuing the ministry because growth had to occur.

This is one reason some believers remain spiritual infants for years. They had a beginning, but they were never consistently watered. Or they resisted the watering that was available because they only wanted emotional spikes and never submitted to steady doctrine. Others get around churches that know how to create excitement but do not know how to strengthen saints. The result is that people can stay shallow while appearing busy. But God’s pattern is deeper than that. He does not merely want professions. He wants rootedness, fruitfulness, discernment, steadfastness, and maturity. Those things require more than a first moment. They require the ongoing ministry of the Word.

That truth should make every laborer serious about more than first impressions. The aim is not just to get the seed in and then abandon the field. The aim is to see truth continue, deepen, and bear fruit under God’s hand. That does not mean the waterer controls the increase. He does not. But it does mean the Lord has ordained continuing ministry as part of the process. The Christian who understands this will stop despising the ordinary means God uses. He will value regular preaching, regular teaching, regular prayer, regular Scripture reading, regular exhortation, regular fellowship, and regular correction. The flesh always wants shortcuts. God often works through faithful repetition.

Conclusion

Watering the seed is the continued ministry of nourishing the truth after it has been planted. It is the steady, patient, prayerful reinforcement of what has already been sown. It includes teaching the truth again and again, exhorting believers to walk in it, correcting them when they drift from it, encouraging them when they grow weary, discipling them beyond a single moment of decision, and praying that God will make the truth effective in their lives. It is not as flashy as planting in the eyes of the flesh, but it is no less necessary in the field of God. The same Bible that honors the planter honors the waterer.

That means the church must stop acting as if the visible beginning is the whole story. A first response is not maturity. A first hearing is not rootedness. A first decision is not full growth. Souls need watering. Churches need watering. Families need watering. Young believers need watering. Older believers need watering too. No one outgrows the need for the

continued ministry of the Word. The saint who thinks he no longer needs repeated truth is already drying out whether he knows it or not. God designed His people to be sustained through ongoing nourishment from Scripture under the ministry He has ordained.

So if the Lord has called you to water, do not despise your place in the field. Teach faithfully. Exhort patiently. Correct lovingly. Encourage steadily. Pray continually. Keep bringing the Word to bear. Keep nourishing what has been planted. Keep pouring truth where roots need strength. Keep serving even when the work is slow, quiet, and unnoticed. Because though the flesh may celebrate the planter more loudly, heaven knows exactly how much depends on the waterer. And when any real growth appears at all, the field will still testify to the same thing Paul wrote long ago: one planted, another watered, but God gave the increase.

4 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – The Seed Is the Word of God

Main Passage: “The seed is the word of God.” (Luke 8:11)

Introduction

There are some truths in the Bible that are so plain a man has to be helped to miss them, and this is one of them. Jesus Christ said, “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). He did not say the seed is human charisma. He did not say the seed is stage presence, brand strategy, emotional tone, fog machines, story arcs, personality cults, church logos, or some polished little motivational monologue dressed up to sound spiritual. He said the seed is the Word of God. That means all true planting and all true watering must remain tied to Scripture if they are to be called biblical at all. Once the Word is removed from the center, the whole work is corrupted at the root. A man may still have a crowd, a budget, a platform, a mailing list, a staff, and a social media following, but if the seed is missing, he does not have the work of God. He has religious activity without the life-giving element God ordained.

That is one reason the church in this generation is so weak, unstable, and childish. It has been raised on substitutes. Men have replaced the incorruptible seed with entertainment, therapy, brand management, self-help slogans, political enthusiasm, sentimental stories, and celebrity-driven stage religion. Then they wonder why the people are shallow, why discernment is low, why conviction is rare, why doctrine is ignored, why spiritual stamina is almost nonexistent, and why saints are tossed to and fro by every fresh wind that blows through the internet. The answer is not complicated. The seed has been replaced. And once the seed is replaced, the crop is altered. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). If new life comes by the

incorruptible seed of the Word, then spiritual strength, stability, and fruitfulness will never come from fleshly substitutes.

So this essay has to call things back to their proper center. Planting is not biblical unless the Word is being sown. Watering is not biblical unless the Word is being applied and reinforced. The power is not in methods, though methods have their place. The power is not in the man, though God uses men. The power is not in polished presentation, though clarity matters. The power is in the truth God breathed out. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful” (Hebrews 4:12). That is where the life is. That is where the conviction is. That is where the enduring force is. If churches abandon the Word in favor of amusement or motivational religion, they are no longer sowing biblical seed at all. They are scattering husks and calling it harvest. This chapter of the series must say it plainly: the seed is the Word of God, and the church must come back to Scripture-centered ministry or remain barren under a thin coat of religious paint.

1. Christ Defined the Seed Once and for All

When the Lord Jesus Christ interprets His own parable, no preacher on earth has any business improving on it. In Luke 8, after giving the parable of the sower, He tells His disciples plainly, “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). That settles the issue. The seed is not mystery money, destiny language, or positive energy. The seed is the Word of God. That means the beginning point for all ministry must be the communication of divine truth. A church may have many activities, but if it is not sowing the Word, it is not doing the central work Christ described. A believer may have many opinions, but if he is not bringing Scripture to bear, he is not planting biblical seed. The Lord did not leave this vague so modern religion could redefine it to suit the flesh. He nailed it down.

That definition also protects the church from spiritual fraud. The moment a man changes the meaning of the seed, he can build almost anything he wants in the name of God. He can turn sowing into fundraising. He can turn planting into business ambition. He can turn increase into visible wealth. He can turn ministry into a performance machine. But Christ will not let him have the language without the meaning. The seed is the Word. That means where the Bible is faithfully preached, taught, distributed, and applied, real seed-work is happening. Where the Bible is sidelined, softened, replaced, or used merely as a decorative verse at the edge of a fleshly speech, the seed is being neglected no matter how “successful” the event looks on the outside.

This is why Bible believers must never apologize for keeping Scripture central. Men will call that narrow, old-fashioned, rigid, or boring. Let them talk. The Lord of glory said the seed is the Word. The only thing that finally matters is whether the field is receiving what God calls

seed. A farmer with gold-plated equipment and no seed is still a fool. A church with dazzling presentation and no substantial Word is still barren. The seed is what gives the whole operation meaning. Without it, all the noise in the world is just noise. With it, even a small, plain, humble ministry can carry the very power of God into human hearts.

2. The Power Is in the Incorruptible Seed

Peter says believers are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). There is more doctrine in that one verse than a stack of modern conference speakers could digest in a year. The Word is called incorruptible seed. That means it carries a quality no human substitute possesses. It is living, enduring, divine truth that does not rot, break down, or lose its force because the centuries pass. Human ideas age. Trends age. Church fads age. Branding language ages. Therapeutic jargon ages. But the Word of God “liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). The same Book that saved a soul generations ago still has the same power because the seed is incorruptible.

That is why the life-giving force in ministry does not come from innovation but from revelation. A man can spend all his energy trying to look fresh, relevant, current, and compelling, and still have nothing that can impart life. Meanwhile, a plain preacher with an open Bible may be handling the one thing in the building that heaven itself calls incorruptible seed. The life is not in the wrapping. The life is in the seed. The church gets in trouble when it starts acting as though the Bible needs to be rescued by marketing. The Bible does not need a makeover. It needs to be believed, preached, taught, and obeyed. Men may package the truth helpfully, but when they imagine the power is in the packaging, they have already drifted from the center.

The incorruptible nature of the seed also means the church should have confidence in it even when the world mocks it. A lot of Christians panic because the Bible sounds too sharp, too old, too authoritative, too doctrinal, too exclusive for modern tastes. So they start smoothing the edges, trimming the hard sayings, and replacing Scripture with whatever sounds more acceptable to the age. That is not faithfulness. That is unbelief wearing a pastor’s smile. If the seed is incorruptible, then it does not need corruption added to it to make it work better. The church must trust what God said about His own Word. It is living. It abides forever. It is fit to do the work God sent it to do.

3. The Parable of the Sower Shows the Seed’s Central Place

In the parable of the sower, the different results do not come from different seeds but from different soils. The seed remains the same throughout. Some falls by the wayside. Some falls on stony ground. Some falls among thorns. Some falls on good ground (Luke 8:5–8).

That is one of the most important ministry lessons in the New Testament. The variable is not the truth itself but the condition of the hearer. Men like to blame the seed when the soil is hard. They think if they can sweeten the message, dilute the doctrine, soften the claims of Christ, or wrap everything in enough entertainment, they can fix the problem. But the Lord did not tell the sower to replace the seed. He told the truth about the soils.

That frees the laborer from two foolish temptations. First, it frees him from thinking he must improve the Word to get results. He does not. The problem is not with the seed. Second, it frees him from despair when some hearers do not respond rightly. The Lord already told him there would be hard ground, shallow ground, and thorny ground. The laborer's responsibility is to sow the seed faithfully. He is not the lord of the soil. He is not the engineer of the human heart. He is not the creator of spiritual receptivity. He is the sower. That means he keeps the seed central and leaves the mysterious inner work of making it fruitful to God.

It is worth noticing that in Christ's own explanation, the life and danger all revolve around the Word. The devil takes away the Word from some hearts "lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12). Others receive the Word with joy but have no root and fall away in temptation (Luke 8:13). Others hear the Word but it gets choked by cares, riches, and pleasures (Luke 8:14). The good ground are those who hear the Word and "keep it" (Luke 8:15). Everything turns on the relation of the hearer to the Word. That should tell any sane church where the battle really is. Not in creating more stimulation, but in getting the Word in and helping hearers receive it rightly.

4. God's Word Does Not Return Void

One of the great promises tied to Scripture-centered ministry is found in Isaiah 55:10–11: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven... So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void." That does not mean every hearer responds correctly, and it does not mean every sermon produces visible fruit on a timetable convenient to our impatience. It means God's Word is never empty of effect. It does what He sends it to do. Sometimes it saves. Sometimes it hardens by exposure rejected. Sometimes it convicts. Sometimes it strengthens. Sometimes it judges. Sometimes it comforts. But it never goes out as a meaningless sound. Heaven takes its own speech seriously.

That passage also helps correct the frantic insecurity of modern ministry. Men act as though if the service is not engineered perfectly, the message cannot work. They act as though the Word is a weak ingredient that has to be propped up by atmosphere, rhythm, drama, and emotional sequencing. But God says His Word will not return void. That is not

an excuse for laziness or poor preparation. It is a call to confidence. The preacher must study. The teacher must be clear. The saint must speak truthfully. But the final confidence is not in technique. It is in the Word that proceeds out of God's mouth. That Word carries divine intent and divine force.

A church that believes Isaiah 55 will begin to look very different from one that does not. It will not despise preaching. It will not be embarrassed by doctrine. It will not feel compelled to entertain people into a mood before the Bible can be heard. It will take Scripture seriously because God takes Scripture seriously. It will believe that one verse planted faithfully can do more than an hour of polished human charm. It will understand that the work may be slower and deeper than spectacle-loving men prefer, but it will also know that God has already said what kind of instrument He blesses. His Word does not return void. That ought to settle a thousand anxious schemes.

5. The Word, Not Gimmicks, Produces Spiritual Life

The Bible says, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12). It does not say branding is quick and powerful. It does not say emotional manipulation is quick and powerful. It does not say celebrity influence is quick and powerful. It says the Word is. That one line should make a whole generation of ministry consultants unemployed. The church has bought into the idea that the central problem is presentation. If only the message were more polished, the environment more stylish, the delivery more current, the identity more marketable, then surely life would appear. But Scripture does not point to those things as the living force. It points to the Word of God.

This is not a denial that communication matters. Men should speak clearly. Churches should remove needless confusion. Teachers should aim for understanding. But there is a universe of difference between helpful clarity and replacing spiritual confidence with gimmickry. The modern church often trusts atmosphere more than Scripture. It trusts mood more than doctrine. It trusts influence more than truth. It trusts the emotional arc of the service more than the force of the Word. That is why so many services feel intense while leaving people biblically empty. They have been stirred without being fed. They have been moved without being rooted. They have been impressed without being established.

A man can make people cry with stories and still never touch the conscience the way one plain verse can. He can create excitement with music and still never bring repentance. He can build loyalty to himself and still never produce true discipleship. Spiritual life comes through the truth God has spoken. James says, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). Paul says, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). The new birth, saving faith, and spiritual strengthening all circle back to

the same center. The Word is the instrument God uses. Everything else must stay subordinate to that fact or it becomes a rival.

6. Entertainment and Self-Help Are Not Biblical Seed

Once churches abandon the Word in favor of entertainment, self-help, and motivational religion, they are no longer sowing biblical seed at all. They may still use religious language. They may still quote a verse at the beginning or end for decoration. They may still call the event a sermon. But if the actual substance is human advice, emotional storytelling, political ranting, or therapeutic pep talk, then the field is not getting the seed Christ defined. It is getting processed religious filler. Men can live a long time on junk and still be unhealthy, and churches can stay open a long time on spiritual junk and still be barren.

Self-help religion is especially dangerous because it sounds practical while starving the soul. It tells men how to feel better about themselves, how to optimize their habits, how to improve their relationships, how to think positively, and how to pursue success, but it often leaves out sin, judgment, repentance, the cross, holiness, doctrine, and the authority of Scripture. In other words, it gives man advice without giving him seed. It may polish behavior at the edges, but it does not impart spiritual life. It may reduce anxiety for an afternoon, but it does not reconcile a sinner to God. It may motivate effort, but it does not produce Christlikeness. The church is not called to become a baptized life-coaching franchise.

Entertainment has the same poison under a different flavor. Once a church decides it must compete with the world on stimulation, it has already conceded that the Word by itself is not enough. So it pours energy into amusement, energy into spectacle, energy into performance, and then wonders why the people become consumers who need constant novelty. They have trained them to crave sensation instead of Scripture. The people may clap, laugh, sing, and come back for more, but appetite for the Bible shrivels because the seed has been displaced. That is not ministry growth. That is spiritual malnutrition with stage lights on it.

7. Scripture-Centered Ministry Is the Only Safe Ministry

If the seed is the Word of God, then the safest ministry on earth is Scripture-centered ministry. Safe does not mean popular. It does not mean easy. It does not mean immune from criticism. It means safe in the sense that it stays nearest to what God has promised to bless. When Paul told Timothy, “Preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2), he was not giving one option among many. He was giving the central charge. The minister’s first business is not to become interesting. It is not to become famous. It is not to become admired. It is to handle

the Book faithfully. That applies to pulpits, classrooms, homes, counseling, evangelism, and personal witness.

Scripture-centered ministry also keeps the laborer humble. If the power is in the Word, then the man cannot boast as though it were in himself. He can rejoice to be used, but he cannot honestly claim credit for the force that belongs to the seed. He studies, yes. He prepares, yes. He labors, yes. But if conviction falls, if faith rises, if saints are strengthened, and if fruit appears, he knows what did the real work. The Word did. God did through the Word. That guards against celebrity madness and reminds the laborer that he is a servant delivering heaven's message, not a star manufacturing life out of his own personality.

Finally, Scripture-centered ministry gives the church something durable. Trends come and go. Famous names rise and fall. Methods flourish and then age badly. But the Word abides. A ministry built on personality may survive only as long as the personality does. A ministry built on novelty may die the moment the novelty fades. But a ministry rooted in Scripture is tied to something eternal. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). If a church wants to leave behind more than smoke and memories, it must build its labor around the one thing Christ Himself said would never pass away.

Conclusion

The seed is the Word of God. That is not a slogan. That is not a preacher's preference. That is the Lord's own definition. From that truth everything else in this chapter follows. All true planting must be the sowing of Scripture. All true watering must be the reinforcement and application of Scripture. The power is not in gimmicks, personalities, celebrity influence, polished branding, emotional pressure, or motivational talk. The power is in the incorruptible seed of divine truth. The Word lives and abides forever. The Word is quick and powerful. The Word does not return void. The Word is what God uses to save, convict, strengthen, establish, and judge.

That means the church must stop trying to improve on God's plan. It must stop acting embarrassed by the Bible. It must stop sidelining preaching and replacing doctrine with atmosphere. It must stop treating Scripture like an accessory to the real work. Scripture is the real work. The church does not need less Bible and more glitter. It does not need less doctrine and more sentiment. It does not need less authority and more self-help. It needs the seed. If the seed is missing, the whole operation is hollow no matter how polished it looks. If the seed is present and faithfully sown, then even a plain ministry can carry the force of heaven into men's souls.

So the call in this essay is simple and severe. Go back to the Book. Preach the Book. Teach the Book. Distribute the Book. Build around the Book. Raise children on the Book. Counsel

from the Book. Witness with the Book. Correct error with the Book. Comfort saints with the Book. Let churches be known, not for their trendiness, but for their allegiance to Scripture. Because in the end, the field of God will never be nourished by substitutes. The only seed He promised to use is the one His Son identified long ago: “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11).

5 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – Paul Planted, Apollos Watered
Main Passage: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:6)

Introduction

One of the clearest signs of carnality in a church is when the people get more excited about the servants than they do about the Lord they are supposed to be serving. Corinth had that disease, and it is still alive and well today. Paul says, “For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:4). That question answers itself. Yes, they were carnal. They had taken two men God was using and turned them into rival banners for party spirit. They had taken laborers and made them mascots. They had taken servants and built little fan clubs around them. That is flesh, plain and simple. It may wear a church grin and carry a Bible under its arm, but it is still flesh. And Paul does not flatter it for one second. He drags it out into the light and calls it what it is.

That is why 1 Corinthians 3 is such a needed chapter for the body of Christ. It rips the halo off human pride and puts every laborer back in his place. Paul does not say he and Apollos were competing for market share in the Corinthian religious economy. He says, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6). In other words, these men were not enemies, not rivals, not brands, and not heads of separate kingdoms. They were coworkers under one Lord, functioning differently in the same field. Paul had one role. Apollos had another role. Neither one was everything. Neither one did the whole job. Neither one was the source of life. That is the balance the flesh hates because the flesh wants a hero it can see, follow, boast in, and brag about.

This essay has to drive home the truth that ministry is shared labor. The body of Christ is designed so that different servants fulfill different functions under the same Lord. One man plants. Another man waters. Another man may reap. Another may strengthen. Another may warn. Another may teach. Another may help behind the scenes where nobody ever notices until the judgment seat of Christ. But the whole thing belongs to God. Spiritual maturity recognizes the value of both the planter and the waterer without exalting either one above

measure. Spiritual immaturity turns servants into idols and functions into factions. So we are going to look closely at Paul and Apollos and see what the Holy Ghost was teaching all along: the work of God is bigger than one man, broader than one gift, and holier than the fleshly game of minister worship.

1. Carnality Turns Servants into Sides

Paul opens the problem right where it lives. “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions... For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:3–4). That is not a minor irritation to him. That is a symptom of spiritual babyhood. A carnal Christian cannot look at a servant of God without trying to make him into a badge for the flesh. He cannot simply receive the ministry and thank God for the gift. He has to make it tribal. He has to make it party spirit. He has to make it “our side” over against “their side.” And that is exactly what happened at Corinth. The church was not thinking in terms of Christ, truth, and the glory of God. It was thinking in terms of favorite names.

That is still how the flesh operates. Put two useful preachers in the same generation and carnal Christians will divide themselves into camps. One group starts talking as though one man is the only clear voice left on earth. Another group starts acting as though the other man carries the only “real” insight. Before long, saints are talking more about personalities than passages, more about the messenger than the message, and more about loyalty to a human name than loyalty to Scripture. It can happen in Bible-believing circles, fundamentalist circles, charismatic circles, social media circles, conference circuits, or little independent church circles. The flesh does not care what label it wears as long as it gets to boast in man.

That is why Paul cuts the whole thing to pieces immediately. He does not encourage their preferences. He does not say, “Well, at least you are all passionate.” No, he calls them carnal. And he is right. The moment a Christian begins attaching the work of God to a cult of personality, he is already drifting off the center. Christ died for the church, not Paul. Christ bought the saints, not Apollos. Christ gives the gifts, calls the laborers, and owns the field. No servant has any right to become the rallying point for fleshly loyalty. The church must learn to receive help from God’s servants without turning them into shrines.

2. Paul and Apollos Were Coworkers, Not Competitors

The genius of the Holy Ghost in 1 Corinthians 3 is that He answers party spirit not with flattery but with perspective. Paul asks, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed” (1 Corinthians 3:5). That is a glorious sentence for destroying religious vanity. Who are they? Ministers. Servants. Instruments. Channels.

Means by whom ye believed. Not lords, not heads, not messiahs, not celebrities, not little popes in waiting. Ministers. The Corinthians had turned them into factions, but the Holy Ghost turned them back into what they actually were. Paul was a minister. Apollos was a minister. Both were used of God. Neither was the source.

Then Paul defines the relationship between their ministries with one of the most balanced lines in the New Testament: “I have planted, Apollos watered” (1 Corinthians 3:6). That is not competition. That is cooperation. Paul had one assignment in the process. Apollos had another. Their roles differed, but their field was the same. Their function differed, but their Master was the same. Their labor differed, but their purpose was the same. Paul did not despise Apollos for watering what he had planted. Apollos did not strut in as though Paul’s foundation was beneath him. They were not trying to outshine each other. They were laboring in sequence under God.

That ought to be a devastating rebuke to the modern obsession with comparison in ministry. Men compare following, visibility, influence, style, numbers, reach, conference invites, and online attention as though the kingdom of God were a performance marketplace. But Paul and Apollos stand there in Scripture like two laborers in muddy boots, each doing the task God gave him. The planter was necessary. The waterer was necessary. Neither one needed to be the other. Neither one needed to erase the other. The field did not call for rivalry. It called for faithfulness. That is how true servants think. The flesh asks, “Who is greater?” The Spirit asks, “Who is faithful in his assigned labor?”

3. Different Functions Do Not Mean Different Kingdoms

One of the most destructive assumptions Christians make is that different functions in ministry must imply different kingdoms. If one man preaches with one emphasis and another teaches with another strength, the flesh instantly starts building separate camps around them. But Paul does the exact opposite. He says, “Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one” (1 Corinthians 3:8). There it is. One. Not identical in role, but one in labor. One in purpose. One in field. One in service under God. The planter is not over here building “Planter Ministries International” while the waterer is over there launching “Waterer Global.” They are one in the work because the work belongs to God.

That truth reaches far beyond Paul and Apollos. In the body of Christ, God distributes gifts, callings, burdens, and functions differently. One man may excel in evangelistic planting. Another may have a gift for doctrinal clarification. Another may labor in pastoral care. Another may strengthen saints quietly through personal exhortation. Another may translate Scripture. Another may teach children. Another may defend truth against error. Another may help support the labor in ways hardly anyone sees. Different functions do not indicate

different kingdoms. They indicate one Lord organizing His laborers according to His wisdom.

This should keep Christians from making silly judgments based on visible differences in function. A waterer may not look like a planter. A teacher may not look like an evangelist. A missionary may not look like a pastor. A faithful mother teaching truth in her home may not look like a pulpit preacher. But all of them may be serving the same Lord in the same field in different capacities. The flesh loves visible hierarchy. It wants to rank and compare and award trophies. But Scripture emphasizes faithfulness in assigned function. The hand does not need to become the foot, and the eye does not need to become the ear. They are not separate bodies because they differ. They are one body because the same Lord placed them where He wanted them.

4. No Single Laborer Does the Whole Job

When Paul says, “I have planted, Apollos watered” (1 Corinthians 3:6), he is announcing a principle that humbles every useful servant of God: no single laborer does the whole job. That is one of the hardest lessons for proud men to learn. The flesh wants to imagine that it is central, complete, self-contained, and indispensable. But the work of God has never rested on one human vessel doing everything. Paul did not do everything at Corinth. Apollos did not do everything at Corinth. Peter did not do everything in the early church. Timothy did not do everything in Ephesus. God spreads the labor around because He did not design the body of Christ to revolve around one personality.

That is why it is so foolish when men act as though they alone are carrying the truth, or their ministry alone is really doing anything that matters. That is pride talking, and pride always sounds bigger than it is. God can use a man greatly, but that does not turn the man into the whole operation. There are saints praying whom the crowd never sees. There are teachers laying foundations the internet never notices. There are parents shaping children in the fear of God while no conference platform ever invites them. There are faithful pastors watering little flocks for decades without ever becoming visible names. There are believers planting seeds through quiet witness that other laborers will water years later. Who can trace it all? Only God.

This is why any servant who really understands ministry will get smaller in his own eyes over time, not larger. The more he sees the complexity of God’s work, the less likely he is to imagine he is the whole machinery. Paul understood that. He could speak boldly about his labor without making himself the center of the universe. He knew God had called him to a particular office and particular work, but he did not mistake his office for the whole body.

He knew others had roles too. A mature laborer can say, “I did my part,” without saying, “I was the whole thing.” That is a mark of wisdom and spiritual sanity.

5. The Body of Christ Is Built for Shared Labor

The doctrine behind Paul and Apollos being one is the doctrine of the body of Christ itself. The New Testament repeatedly teaches that the church is one body with many members, many functions, and one Head, who is Christ. Paul says elsewhere, “For the body is not one member, but many” (1 Corinthians 12:14). That means shared labor is not a sign of weakness in the church. It is the design of the church. God did not intend all His work to come through one gift, one personality, or one style. He intended diversity of function under unity of Lordship. That keeps the body dependent on Christ rather than hypnotized by one spectacular servant.

This also means spiritual maturity learns to appreciate functions it may not personally embody. A planter should thank God for waterers. A waterer should thank God for planters. A preacher should thank God for teachers. A teacher should thank God for soulwinners. A pastor should thank God for faithful praying saints, Scripture distributors, encouragers, helpers, and laborers whose names do not trend anywhere but are written in heaven. The mature Christian does not need every servant to look like his favorite servant. He recognizes grace in different forms. He sees the hand of God in different labors. He understands that Christ is glorified not by one man doing everything but by many members functioning under one Head.

Corinth had missed that entirely. They were acting as though attaching themselves to one minister’s name made them spiritually superior. But the body does not work that way. A church that truly understands the body of Christ will resist that party spirit. It will honor the gifts God gives without turning them into idols. It will recognize usefulness without creating cults. It will value laborers without imagining any one laborer is the fountainhead of all blessing. When the body is functioning properly, Christ gets bigger and men get smaller. When the body is malfunctioning, men get bigger and Christ gets used as the logo on their operation.

6. Minister Worship Is Robbery Against God

At the heart of minister worship is theft. It steals from God what belongs to God and gives it to a man. That is why Paul will not tolerate it. He knows exactly where it leads. If the Corinthians keep exalting Paul and Apollos, they will soon be measuring truth by personalities instead of measuring personalities by truth. They will begin excusing error, indulgence, imbalance, and pride because they have made peace with hero-worship. Once a man becomes an icon in the minds of his admirers, he becomes dangerous to them even

if he never intended it. They stop listening critically, stop examining by Scripture, and start receiving by emotional loyalty.

The Bible never tells believers to worship ministers. It tells them to esteem faithful labor, yes. “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you... And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake” (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13). But esteem for labor is not idolatry of personality. Love for a servant’s work is not blind devotion to his name. Honor is not worship. Respect is not surrender of discernment. The minute a minister becomes untouchable, uncorrectable, unquestionable, or central in a way that obscures Christ, things have already gone rotten. The church must learn to honor men as servants without ever enthroning them as lords.

That applies not only to famous preachers but to lesser-known circles too. A man does not have to have a global platform to become a little pope in his own corner. There are churches where the pastor’s preferences practically outrank Scripture in the minds of the people. There are circles where quoting the right preacher carries more weight than quoting the right passage. There are followers online who know every catchphrase of a personality and almost nothing of the chapter-and-verse ground underneath it. That is robbery against God because the glory that should rise to Christ gets diverted into human loyalty. Paul and Apollos were never meant to become shrines. They were meant to be servants pointing beyond themselves.

7. Spiritual Maturity Values Both Without Exalting Either

The mature Christian can do something the carnal Christian cannot do: he can value a servant deeply without turning him into an idol. He can thank God for a planter without despising the waterer. He can appreciate a waterer without pretending the planter was unnecessary. He can receive help from different gifts without feeling the need to build a camp around each one. That is what Paul is calling the Corinthians up into. He is not saying ministers are meaningless. He is saying they must be seen rightly. “Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one” (1 Corinthians 3:8). That means both are valuable. And then he adds, “and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1 Corinthians 3:8). That means God is perfectly capable of honoring each servant without the church turning them into rival banners.

This is a liberating truth. It frees the saint from comparison. He no longer has to ask which servant is “the one” as though God only uses one channel at a time. It frees him from jealousy. He can rejoice that another man watered what one man planted. It frees him from insecurity. He does not have to belong to a personality tribe to feel spiritually safe. He can belong to Christ and receive help from the various servants Christ appoints. It also frees

laborers themselves from trying to be everything. The planter can plant. The waterer can water. Each can labor faithfully without pretending to possess every gift and perform every role.

That is how a healthy church grows. It learns to see laborers as gifts from the Head to the body, not as heads over private sects. It learns to thank God for faithful men without using them to fuel vanity. It learns to receive the labor while remembering who owns the field. It becomes able to say, "God used Paul," and "God used Apollos," without saying, "Therefore I am of Paul," or "Therefore I am of Apollos." Spiritual maturity does not flatten the differences in labor. It simply puts them in proper relation to the same Lord. When that happens, the glory rises where it belongs, and the church becomes steadier, saner, and stronger.

Conclusion

Paul planted. Apollos watered. Those are not the words of rivalry but of shared labor. The Holy Ghost put that sentence in Scripture to teach the church that different servants can fulfill different functions under the same Lord without becoming competitors. Corinth had turned useful men into personality markers for factional pride, and Paul called it carnality. He would not let them attach the work of God to human banners. He reminded them that both he and Apollos were ministers, servants, laborers, not sources of life and not heads of separate kingdoms. The field belonged to God then, and it still belongs to God now.

That means the body of Christ must refuse the disease of minister worship. It must refuse to build party spirit around names, styles, gifts, and personalities. It must learn to recognize that no single laborer does the whole job. One plants. Another waters. Another strengthens. Another teaches. Another warns. Another prays. Another helps quietly with no visible applause. God designed the church that way so Christ would remain central and no man could honestly claim the whole operation for himself. The mature believer sees the wisdom in that and rejoices in it.

So the lesson in this essay is plain. Appreciate the planter. Appreciate the waterer. Thank God for both. But do not attach yourself to either one in a way that steals from Christ. Do not make a servant into a side. Do not make a gift into a kingdom. Do not let the flesh turn laborers into little idols. Receive the ministry, bless God for the labor, and keep your eyes on the Lord of the harvest. Because when all is said and done, Paul was not crucified for you, Apollos did not purchase the church with his blood, and neither one gave the increase. They labored. God gave life. And that is exactly why God gets the glory.

6 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – Labourers Together with God

Main Passage: “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.” (1 Corinthians 3:9)

Introduction

There is a crooked habit in human nature that shows up even after a man gets saved. One sinner tries to work his way to heaven and imagines God is impressed with his effort. Another sinner gets saved by grace and then swings so far the other direction he acts as though obedience, service, and labor are somehow suspicious words. One crowd says, “Work to be saved.” The other crowd says, “Since I am saved, nothing is expected of me.” Both of them are out in the weeds. The Bible cuts a straight line right down the middle of both errors. “For by grace are ye saved through faith... not of works” (Ephesians 2:8-9), and then in the next breath, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Ephesians 2:10). There it is. Salvation is not by works, but salvation is certainly unto a life that includes them. The man who tries to buy heaven insults the cross. The man who treats grace like an excuse for idleness insults the purpose of grace.

That is why 1 Corinthians 3:9 is such a needed verse in an age full of dead religion on one side and lazy profession on the other. Paul says, “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9). He does not say, “We are passengers together with God.” He does not say, “We are spectators together with God.” He says, “labourers.” That means the Christian life, once rightly understood, is not a lounge chair with a promise attached to it. It is a calling. It is a stewardship. It is a field. It is a building. It is a race, a fight, a testimony, a ministry, and a labor under the hand of God. The believer is not saved by labor, but he is saved into a life where labor matters. God does not save a man, indwell him, gift him, teach him, and leave him on the earth for no reason.

That is the heart of this essay. Why does the Lord leave believers here after salvation? Why not save them and carry them straight to glory the same hour? Why leave them in a cursed world, surrounded by temptation, weakness, suffering, false doctrine, devils, disappointments, and conflict? The answer is not that He forgot them. The answer is that He has a purpose for them. He has left His people here to glorify Him, bear witness to the lost, strengthen the saints, uphold the truth, and labor in His field until He is finished with their course. This essay has to bring salvation, calling, purpose, and ministry together in a scriptural way that rejects both works salvation and idle Christianity. The believer is not here by accident. He is not here merely to occupy space until heaven opens. He is here because the Lord still has work for him to do.

1. Saved by Grace Through Faith, Not by Works

Before a man can understand labor in the Christian life, he has to get the foundation right. If he misses that, every sermon on service will either puff him up or condemn him. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, apart from works. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). That is not a side issue. That is the dividing line between the gospel of God and every counterfeit religion under the sun. A man is not justified by church attendance, moral reform, charitable acts, tears, rituals, sacraments, promises, perseverance, or law-keeping. He is justified by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, who died for his sins, was buried, and rose again.

That truth has to stay nailed down or every talk of labor becomes poison. If you tell a lost man to work without first telling him Christ finished the work of redemption, you will send him straight into self-righteousness or despair. He will either think he is earning points with God or he will collapse under the weight of his own failure. The Bible never tells a sinner to contribute to his justification. It tells him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). You do not labor your way into the family of God. You are born into it by faith in Christ. The cross is not God’s down payment waiting for your installments.

That is why the child of God must never talk about good works in a way that muddies the gospel. The minute service begins to sound like a condition for acceptance before God, the whole thing has gone rotten. Christ did not say, “It is almost finished.” He said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). The believer serves because he is saved, not in order to become saved. He works from life, not for life. He labors as a son, not as a slave trying to buy his adoption papers. That is the only ground from which true Christian labor can proceed without corruption.

2. Created in Christ Jesus Unto Good Works

Now once that foundation is laid, the same Bible that excludes works from salvation includes works in the purpose of salvation. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Notice the order. Grace through faith first. Good works after. Not as the root, but as the fruit. Not as the cause, but as the consequence. God saves a man by grace, and then that saved man becomes God’s workmanship. He becomes a new creature in Christ. And that new creature is not designed for spiritual laziness. He is created unto good works.

This is one place where a lot of Christians get uneasy because they have spent years fighting legalism, and rightly so, but in fighting it they have let some of the language of duty,

obedience, and labor slip out of their vocabulary. The New Testament never does that. It warns against trusting works for salvation, but it constantly commands works as the evidence of a life now possessed by grace. Paul said believers are to be “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). He told Titus that they which have believed in God should “be careful to maintain good works” (Titus 3:8). James says faith without works is dead in the sense that a faith that never moves, never serves, never acts, and never manifests is a barren thing before men.

So the Christian must learn to say two things at once without apology. First, I am saved by grace apart from works. Second, I was saved for a life that includes them. A man who cannot say the first is headed into bondage. A man who cannot say the second is headed into uselessness. The Lord did not save you so you could sit down and admire your doctrinal position while doing nothing with the life He purchased. He saved you to glorify Him in a body that is still on this earth. That means the Christian life is not merely a set of beliefs lodged in the head. It is a divinely purposed life that moves, serves, labors, and bears witness.

3. Why the Lord Leaves Believers on Earth

If all God wanted to do was rescue a sinner from hell, He could save him and take him home that same minute. The fact that He does not do that ought to tell a man something. The Lord has a purpose in leaving His people here. Jesus said to His Father, “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world” (John 17:18). There it is. The believer remains in the world because he has been sent in it. He is not here as a permanent citizen. He is here as an ambassador. He is not here because heaven forgot to collect him. He is here because heaven has assigned him a course to run before he goes home.

Part of that purpose is witness. Christ said, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me” (Acts 1:8). That was not limited in principle to the apostles alone. The church is still here to bear witness to the truth of Christ before a lost world. Another part of that purpose is the strengthening of the saints. The New Testament is filled with commands about edifying one another, exhorting one another, comforting one another, and provoking one another unto love and good works. Still another part is glorifying God by holy living in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. The point is that the believer is not left here to drift. He is left here to serve.

This also explains why the Christian life often involves tension. The child of God has heaven as his home, but earth as his field. He belongs above, but he labors below. He has been translated spiritually, but he still walks in a body that must serve in a hostile world. Paul said, “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). He knew heaven was

better. But he also knew remaining in the flesh was “more needful” for the sake of others (Philippians 1:24). That is the same principle. The Lord leaves His people here because their presence, witness, labor, and faithfulness still serve a purpose in His present work.

4. Labourers Together with God

Paul says, “For we are labourers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9). That is one of the most humbling and invigorating statements in the New Testament. It does not mean the believer becomes God’s equal partner, as if heaven and man were in a business arrangement between peers. It means God, in His grace, has chosen to involve His people in His work. He could do it all without us, and yet He appoints us to labor under Him, in dependence on Him, and for His glory. That ought to kill both pride and passivity at the same time. Pride dies because the work is still His. Passivity dies because He has chosen to use His people in it.

Notice also that Paul uses the word “labourers.” Christianity is not passive drift. It is not merely absorbing sermons and collecting opinions. It is labor. That labor takes different forms in different believers, but the principle stands. Some labor in preaching. Some in teaching. Some in witnessing. Some in prayer. Some in helping and giving. Some in strengthening the weak. Some in raising children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Some in bearing testimony before family or coworkers. Some in supporting the work behind the scenes where nobody sees. But if a man is saved and remains on this earth, the idea of labor is not foreign to his calling.

This truth also keeps the Christian balanced. He is not working alone, because he is a laborer together with God. That means he can work in confidence, because the decisive power is not his own. But he is still a laborer. That means he cannot hide behind God’s sovereignty and excuse his idleness. The New Testament never treats divine power as a reason to sit still. It treats divine power as a reason to serve boldly. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). The work is the Lord’s, but it is still work, and the believer is still expected to abound in it.

5. The Purpose of Good Works in the Believer’s Life

Good works in the Christian life are not currency for buying God’s favor. They are expressions of obedience, love, usefulness, and testimony flowing from a life already saved by grace. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). There is the purpose. Not self-glory, but God’s glory. Good works are to reflect the Father, not advertise the worker.

The believer does not labor so men will say, “What an impressive Christian.” He labors so that whatever is seen of Christ in him may turn attention upward.

Good works also serve the saints. The body of Christ is not strengthened by theory alone. It is strengthened by actual ministry. A kind word, a faithful rebuke, a helping hand, a doctrinal explanation, a prayer offered, a burden carried, a truth taught to a child, a meal brought to the hurting, a tract handed out, a missionary supported, a weak brother restored. All of that belongs to the realm of good works. They are not random moral decorations. They are practical expressions of a grace-changed life operating in the field where God placed it. This is why Paul says believers should “maintain” them. They matter for the health of the body and the witness of the church.

Good works also expose the emptiness of empty profession. A man who says he has faith but has no burden, no service, no witness, no movement, no concern for truth, no care for saints, and no desire to obey is giving very little visible evidence that grace has touched him. That does not mean he is justified by the evidence. It means the evidence reveals something about what is there. The New Testament expects a saved man’s life to move. Not perfectly, not sinlessly, but really. The life of God in the soul does not produce absolute passivity as its normal fruit. It produces a new direction. It produces a desire to please the Lord. It produces labor done out of love and gratitude.

6. Rejecting Works Salvation and Idle Christianity

The devil is content to drive men into either ditch as long as they leave the road. One ditch is works salvation. That crowd says do, do, do, as though Christ had left the job unfinished. They lay burdens on men’s backs and call it holiness. They confuse fruit with root and then wonder why nobody has assurance. The other ditch is idle Christianity. That crowd says, “Grace, grace, grace,” but by it they mean spiritual inactivity, excuse-making, and indifference. They talk as if any call to labor is a threat to grace itself. Both crowds are wrong because both crowds have mutilated the Bible.

The Scriptural balance is this: salvation is by grace through faith alone, and the saved man is then called into a life of labor for the glory of God. That balance appears all through the New Testament. Paul worked “more abundantly than they all,” yet said, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Grace did not make him passive. Grace made him labor. But his labor did not become a ground of boasting because he knew the grace of God was the enabling cause. That is the balance modern religion either cannot or will not keep. It either makes labor into the means of salvation or treats grace as a permission slip for uselessness.

A believer has to reject both errors with equal strength. He must never let anyone move him one inch off the truth that Christ alone saves. And he must never let anyone talk him out of the fact that Christ saves men into service, not sloth. Grace is not only pardoning grace. It is teaching grace. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us” (Titus 2:11-12). Teaching us what? To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Grace is not a hammock. Grace is a holy teacher. And when grace has done its teaching, a man does not become proud in works, but he certainly should not become dead in them either.

7. Faithful Labor Is Part of Why You Are Still Here

A Christian who asks, “Why am I still here?” should not always expect the answer to be comfort only. Part of the answer is commission. You are still here because God still has use for your life. It may not be public. It may not be dramatic. It may not make headlines. But if He left you here, He left you here for a reason. Paul could say near the end, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). Course means assignment. Fight means conflict. Kept the faith means stewardship. He did not drift his way into old age. He ran something God had given him to run. The same principle applies to every child of God, though not all in the same office.

That should stir the believer out of useless living. There are Christians who spend years treating their salvation like a private insurance policy and their remaining time on earth like an extended vacation from responsibility. But the Lord did not leave you here just to consume blessings, analyze everybody else’s ministry, and wait for the rapture while doing as little as possible. He left you here to glorify Him in the place He assigned you. He left you here to witness, to strengthen, to pray, to serve, to help, to give, to raise, to teach, to exhort, to comfort, to warn, to stand, and to hold forth the word of life in a dark world.

And this is where the truth gets personal. You do not have to do another man’s labor, but you do have to do yours. Not everybody is Paul. Not everybody is Apollos. Not everybody is a missionary, pastor, evangelist, or public teacher. But every believer has a place in the field. Every believer has a stewardship. Every believer has some sphere in which faithfulness matters. The question is not whether you can do everything. The question is whether you are doing what the Lord put in front of you. Faithful labor is not optional for the child of God because it is tied to the very reason God has left him here.

Conclusion

The believer is saved by grace through faith apart from works, and that truth must never be surrendered. Christ finished the work of redemption, and no sinner adds one ounce to the merit of His blood. But that same believer, once saved, becomes God’s workmanship,

created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The Bible never confuses those two truths, and neither should the church. Grace is the cause of salvation. Good works are part of the purpose of the saved life. A Christian is not justified by labor, but he is certainly called into it. He is not redeemed to be idle. He is redeemed to be useful.

That is why the Lord leaves His people on earth. He leaves them here to glorify Him, to witness to the lost, to strengthen the saints, to uphold the truth, and to labor in His field while the day lasts. “For we are labourers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9). That phrase destroys the excuse of lazy Christianity. It also destroys the pride of self-made religion. The believer labors, but he labors under God and by God’s grace. The work is real, but the glory belongs to the Lord. That keeps the gospel pure and the calling clear.

So if you are saved, stop talking as though grace means God expects nothing from you. He saved you on purpose. He left you here on purpose. He gifted you on purpose. He put you in your family, church, workplace, and field of witness on purpose. Do not try to earn what Christ already purchased. But do not sit still with what Christ purchased either. Get in the field. Find your labor. Be faithful with your stewardship. Abound in the work of the Lord. And when the day comes to leave this world, may it be said of you, not that you merely occupied space under grace, but that by the grace of God you were one of His labourers together with Him.

7 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – The Harvest Truly Is Plenteous

Main Passage: “Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.” (Matthew 9:37)

Introduction

There are some statements from Jesus Christ that ought to shake a believer right out of his comfortable chair, and this is one of them. “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few” (Matthew 9:37). That is not the language of a man trying to build a religious brand. That is not the speech of a salesman growing a platform, a conference machine, or a celebrity ministry empire. That is the burden of the Son of God looking over the souls of men and seeing a field ready for labor while the workers stand scarce. The modern church talks a great deal about growth, influence, image, relevance, and expansion, but Christ talked about harvest and labourers. He was not scanning the crowds wondering how to turn them into consumers. He was moved with compassion because they were spiritually needy, exposed, and vulnerable, and He spoke in terms of a harvest field that demanded action.

That right there shows how far church culture has drifted from the heart of God. A great many ministries today are designed around visibility rather than burden, around recognition rather than service, and around maintenance rather than mission. Men speak about “building something big” as though the kingdom of God were a franchise opportunity. But when Jesus looked at multitudes, He did not say, “Behold the branding potential.” He “was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). That is the context of the harvest statement. Compassion came first. Spiritual perception followed. And then came the charge: the harvest is plenteous, the labourers are few. In other words, the problem was not a lack of souls. The problem was a lack of workers.

This essay has to press that truth hard, because sowing and watering are not side issues in this dispensation. They are central to the mission of the church. Christ Himself told His disciples to pray that God would send forth labourers into His harvest (Matthew 9:38). That means the work matters. That means the shortage is real. That means passive Christianity is not merely unfortunate; it stands out against the direct words of Jesus Christ. The believer is called to see souls the way Christ sees them, not as background scenery, not as audience members, not as metrics, not as interruptions, but as a harvest field needing faithful labor. This study is meant to wake up the saint who has forgotten why he is still here and to remind the church that the mission has never changed. The field is full. The need is urgent. The Lord still wants labourers.

1. Christ Saw a Harvest Where Others Saw a Crowd

The average man sees a crowd and thinks in terms of inconvenience, opportunity, or statistics. Christ saw a crowd and saw souls. Matthew says, “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them” (Matthew 9:36). That is where the whole matter begins. Before He spoke about labourers, He felt compassion. Before He gave instruction, He revealed burden. He did not stand detached from human need, analyzing the masses like a strategist studies market share. He looked at men and women and saw spiritual condition. He saw weariness. He saw confusion. He saw exposure. He saw people “as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). That is a terrifying image. Sheep without a shepherd are vulnerable, wandering, and easy prey.

That kind of sight is missing in a great deal of modern Christianity. The church often sees crowds the way the world sees crowds. It sees turnout, traffic, optics, demographics, or political potential. But Christ saw a harvest. He saw men not merely as bodies in motion but as eternal souls standing in relation to God, truth, judgment, and mercy. That is why soul-winning is not an optional hobby for a few unusually burdened believers. It is rooted in how Christ Himself looked at humanity. If you see men as Christ saw them, you will not be

content with merely sitting in church and congratulating yourself on your doctrinal position while the field stands white around you.

This is also why spiritual coldness is so dangerous. A cold Christian can read about hell, quote about grace, debate doctrine online, and still have little practical burden for souls. He has truth in the head and frost in the heart. But Christ was “moved with compassion” (Matthew 9:36). A right view of the harvest is not produced by bare activism. It begins with seeing what the Lord saw. It begins with understanding that human beings are not props in your life story. They are souls that will spend eternity somewhere. Once that sinks in, the field starts looking different. The believer begins to feel the weight of why the Lord spoke as He did.

2. The Harvest Is Plenteous

Jesus did not say the harvest was moderate, uncertain, or occasional. He said, “The harvest truly is plenteous” (Matthew 9:37). That means the opportunity for gospel labor is abundant. There is no shortage of people who need Christ. There is no shortage of souls who need the truth. There is no shortage of people who need the gospel planted into their ears, the Word planted into their conscience, and the truth watered into understanding. The shortage is never on the side of need. Need is everywhere. Blindness is everywhere. Confusion is everywhere. Sin is everywhere. Death is everywhere. The field is not empty. It is full.

That should correct the strange assumption some Christians seem to carry around that real ministry opportunities are rare and only come wrapped in special circumstances. The Lord did not speak as though harvest work were hidden away in a few exotic places. He spoke as though the field was already there, right in front of the disciples. It is the same way today. Souls are in homes, neighborhoods, schools, churches, workplaces, hospitals, stores, streets, and online spaces where truth can still be spoken. A believer does not need to invent a field. He is standing in one. The harvest truly is plenteous. The problem is not that there are no opportunities. The problem is that Christians have become so distracted, inward, and entertained that they can stand in the middle of a field and never notice the crop.

It also means this age remains a season of opportunity. As long as the Lord has not yet gathered His church home, there is still harvest ground before us. That should produce urgency without panic and seriousness without despair. The believer is not to look at the world and say, “There is nothing to be done.” Christ did not say that. He said the harvest is plenteous. That means there is still a great deal to be done. The very words of the Lord

should rebuke spiritual resignation. A saint who talks as if the world is too far gone to bother witnessing has forgotten what Christ said about the field.

3. The Labourers Are Few

After saying the harvest is plenteous, Jesus adds the painful part: “but the labourers are few” (Matthew 9:37). There is the bottleneck. Not lack of souls. Lack of labourers. Not lack of need. Lack of workers. The field is not the problem. The shortage is in the church. That is one of the most searching statements a believer can read, because it exposes the real crisis. Heaven is not complaining that there are too many faithful workers and not enough sinners to reach. Heaven is saying there are masses of souls and not enough labourers going out after them.

This is where passive Christianity gets exposed for what it is. A great many believers want the comfort of salvation without the burden of service. They want heaven as their destination and earth as their lounging room. They are happy to receive truth, enjoy fellowship, sing songs, and talk prophecy, but when it comes to actual labor in the harvest, they are scarce. Christ did not say the listeners are few, the watchers are few, or the critics are few. He said the labourers are few. There are always enough armchair theologians, enough complainers, enough opinion machines, enough people who can explain what is wrong with everybody else’s ministry. But actual laborers remain rare.

That should make every child of God ask a very plain question: am I one of the few, or am I one of the many who live near the field but never enter it? The Lord’s words are not meant merely for admiration. They are meant to press the conscience. The problem of too few labourers is not solved by agreeing that more labourers are needed while continuing to do nothing. It is solved when saints stop admiring the mission from a distance and begin to take their place in it. Christ identified the lack. The church ought not pretend the lack has disappeared.

4. Christ Commanded Prayer for Labourers

The Lord did not stop with observation. He gave a command. “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:38). That verse alone proves that the work of sowing and watering is not some minor specialty issue for unusually active Christians. It is central enough that Christ told His disciples to pray about it directly. The shortage of labourers was not to be met with shrugging, complaining, or committee language. It was to be met with prayer to the Lord of the harvest. That means labor in the field is both commanded and dependent. It is commanded because the Lord wants labourers. It is dependent because only He can send them properly.

This also guards against fleshly activism. The answer to too few labourers is not merely human pressure or guilt tactics. It is prayerful submission to the Lord of the harvest. He knows where to send. He knows whom to stir. He knows how to burden hearts. He knows where the field is white and where labor is needed most. The church does not own the harvest. Christ called it “his harvest” (Matthew 9:38). That means the church must ask the Owner to send workers into His field. Prayer is not a substitute for labor, but prayer is part of the labor. It shows we understand that the field is God’s and that workers must be raised up and sent under His authority.

It is also worth noticing that the men who were told to pray would themselves become labourers. That is often how God works. He burdens the praying heart and then moves the praying heart into the work it was praying about. A believer who really begins asking the Lord to send labourers should not be surprised if the Lord starts addressing him about his own excuses, passivity, and usefulness. Sometimes the answer to “send labourers” begins with “go.” Prayer for labourers is not a safe religious ritual that leaves the one praying untouched. It places the soul under the eye of the Lord of the harvest.

5. The Mission Is Souls, Not Religious Branding

Everything about Christ’s language in Matthew 9 cuts against the grain of modern religious image-building. He speaks of harvest, labourers, compassion, and shepherdless sheep. There is not a trace there of brand curation, prestige management, or platform obsession. Christ’s concern was not to produce admired organizations. It was to reach souls. That is one reason so much of modern church culture feels spiritually fraudulent. It speaks endlessly of influence and visibility while saying little about compassion for the lost and labor in the field. It is entirely possible to build a highly recognizable religious machine that has almost forgotten the harvest.

A ministry can become intoxicated with its own name, its own look, its own style, and its own reputation until actual gospel burden gets pushed to the edge. Then everything starts revolving around maintaining the image. Sermons get softened so the brand stays marketable. Conviction gets trimmed so the atmosphere stays pleasant. Hard truth gets avoided so the crowd stays manageable. But Christ did not call for brand ambassadors. He called for labourers. A labourer is not worried first about how impressive he looks in the field. He is worried about the work. He is not measuring his success by applause. He is measuring faithfulness by whether the labor is being done.

That does not mean organization is sinful or visibility is inherently wrong. It means they become deadly when they replace the burden. The central question is not whether men know the ministry name. The central question is whether souls are being reached with the

truth of God. The church is not here to make itself famous. It is here to glorify Christ in the salvation of the lost and the strengthening of the saints. Anything that shifts the burden away from that toward self-display is already beginning to rot. Christ's words call us back to a simpler, sharper, holier vision: the field is full, and what is needed is not more image but more labourers.

6. Sowing and Watering Are Central, Not Secondary

Because Christ spoke of the harvest in these terms, the work of sowing and watering must be understood as central to the church's mission in this age. If the harvest is plenteous and labourers are few, then labor in the Word is not some side issue for energetic believers. It is part of the very reason the church remains on earth. Sowing is the planting of the seed of the Word. Watering is the continued ministry that nourishes and strengthens what has been sown. Both belong to harvest labor. Both belong to the mission Christ had in view. The one who treats these things as secondary has not listened carefully to the Lord of the harvest.

This corrects a common imbalance. Some churches act as though the entire Christian life is maintenance of the already gathered saints with little burden to plant the seed beyond their walls. Other groups make noise about outreach but do not value doctrinal watering, as though getting a quick response were the whole story. The Lord's field needs both planting and watering because He is concerned with actual souls, not merely statistics. He wants laborers who will go forth with the Word, not religious hobbyists who treat ministry like an occasional volunteer project when it fits their schedule and mood.

It also means every believer should see some connection between his life and the harvest. Not every believer has the same office, but every believer is here during harvest season. That means prayer, witness, service, support, teaching, exhortation, Scripture distribution, family discipleship, and local church faithfulness all matter. The saint who says, "Well, that is the preacher's job," has not understood the largeness of Christ's command. The Lord did not tell only a select inner circle to care about the harvest. He revealed His burden to disciples and told them to pray accordingly. The harvest issue belongs to the life of the church, not just to a few visible workers.

7. Souls Must Be Seen the Way Christ Sees Them

At the bottom of all of this is a question of sight. How do you see people? Christ saw them as sheep without a shepherd and as a plenteous harvest. That means He saw both their helplessness and their potential gathering under God's hand. A believer who sees people merely as annoyances, opponents, political units, content consumers, or background scenery will not labor rightly. His heart will stay dry because his eyes are wrong. The Lord

wants His people to look at souls through the lens of truth and compassion. That does not mean sentimental softness about sin. It means spiritual seriousness about what human beings are and where they stand.

This kind of sight changes behavior. It changes the way a believer prays. It changes the way he speaks. It changes the way he uses his time. It changes the way he evaluates ministry. He starts asking not merely, “Was this impressive?” but “Did this help reach and strengthen souls?” He starts feeling the disconnect between endless self-focus and actual kingdom usefulness. He starts realizing that a great many things which pass for ministry today are little more than religious entertainment for bored people, while the field outside remains full of men and women needing the gospel. Christlike sight breaks complacency.

And this is where the challenge of the essay lands. The believer is not permitted to say he loves Christ while remaining indifferent to what moved Christ. If the Lord was moved with compassion, if the Lord spoke of the harvest, if the Lord commanded prayer for labourers, then indifference to souls is not a small defect. It is a contradiction in the Christian life. No one is saying every believer must become a public evangelist. But every believer must let the Lord adjust his eyes, his burden, and his sense of purpose. Souls are not a side matter. They are standing all around us in the field Christ described.

Conclusion

“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few” (Matthew 9:37). That statement remains a living rebuke to the church. It tells us the field is full, the need is real, and the shortage is not on the side of souls needing help but on the side of saints willing to labor. Christ was not burdened for image, branding, and religious prestige. He was moved with compassion for wandering, needy, shepherdless people. He looked at them and saw a harvest. That means the church is never more like her Lord than when she sees souls with that same seriousness and compassion.

It also means prayer for labourers is not optional window dressing. Christ commanded it because the need is central, not secondary. The work of sowing and watering is part of the heart of the church’s mission in this age. The field belongs to God. The harvest belongs to God. The laborers must be sent by God. But God has chosen to involve His people in that very work. So passive Christianity has no shelter here. A saint cannot hear Matthew 9 honestly and remain content with a life of spiritual observation only. The Lord of the harvest is still calling attention to the same shortage.

So the final charge is simple. See souls as Christ sees them. Pray as Christ commanded. Refuse the narcotic of passive religion. Refuse the vanity of brand-centered ministry. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers, and be willing for that prayer to land on your

own life. Get the Word into the field. Plant it. Water it. Support those who labor. Strengthen those who are weak. And remember that while men build platforms and protect their image, Christ is still looking over the multitudes and saying what He said long ago: the harvest truly is plenteous.

8 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – God Is Not Willing That Any Should Perish

Main Passage: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

Introduction

One of the great lies of the last days is that God’s delay means God’s indifference. Scoffers look at the passing of time and mistake mercy for weakness. They say, “Where is the promise of his coming?” (2 Peter 3:4), as if the patience of God were proof that judgment is never coming. But Peter answers that foolishness with one of the clearest revelations of God’s heart in the present age. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward” (2 Peter 3:9). That means the delay is not because God forgot. The delay is not because God is unable. The delay is not because prophecy failed. The delay is because God is patient. The Judge has not lost His gavel. He is holding it back in mercy while the door of repentance still stands open.

That truth fits hand in glove with the whole burden of this series. If God is longsuffering, then the age of grace is not empty time. It is opportunity. It is mercy extended. It is room given for repentance, salvation, witness, planting, watering, and gospel labor. The Lord is not stretching out this dispensation because He enjoys watching men continue in sin. He is stretching it out because He is giving space for men to turn. Paul says God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). That is not a sentimental slogan. That is a revelation of the generous heart of God toward sinners in this present age. He still saves. He still calls. He still convicts. He still opens the door to whosoever will.

This essay has to press that truth hard, because there are errors on both sides here too. One crowd treats God’s patience as if it means judgment will never come. Another crowd becomes so hard and fatalistic that they talk as if mercy itself is almost an embarrassment. The Bible has no sympathy with either spirit. God is holy, and judgment is certain. God is merciful, and His patience is real. The same Lord who will return in flaming fire is the Lord

who is presently extending another day of grace. That ought not make the church sleepy. It ought to make the church urgent. Every day of delay is another day of mercy. Every sunrise in this age is another witness to divine longsuffering. And every extra day given to this world is one more day in which the saints ought to be planting and watering the truth while there is still time.

1. God's Delay Is Not Divine Weakness

Peter says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness" (2 Peter 3:9). That verse is aimed like a spear straight through the chest of every scoffer who mistakes delay for failure. Men count slackness by human standards. If a man says he is coming and does not arrive when expected, they assume he forgot, lied, changed his mind, or could not carry it through. They try to measure God with the yardstick they use for politicians, salesmen, and weak men. But the Lord is not a weak man fumbling a schedule. He is the eternal God, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). If He delays, the delay has a purpose. If He waits, the waiting is holy. If judgment has not yet fallen in its final form, it is not because He lost control of history.

This matters because the church is always in danger of absorbing the world's impatience. Men say, if Christ were really coming, why has it taken this long? If judgment were certain, why has it not already broken loose in full? If God truly hates sin, why does He still permit the wicked to strut, mock, boast, and blaspheme? But the Bible does not answer those questions by diminishing God's certainty. It answers them by magnifying His longsuffering. Delay does not mean the promise failed. Delay means God is still allowing time before the final stroke comes down. Noah preached righteousness for years before the flood arrived. The flood's delay did not disprove the flood. It showed God's patience before the flood.

This truth should steady the believer. The saint must never interpret divine patience as divine hesitation. God has not softened on sin. God has not lowered His standard. God has not forgotten His promise. The day of the Lord will come, just as Peter says it will (2 Peter 3:10). The issue is not whether it will come. The issue is why it has not yet come. And Peter answers that with divine longsuffering. So the church must stop talking as if the delay were some awkward silence in heaven. It is not awkward. It is merciful. It is intentional. It is part of the revealed purpose of God in this present age.

2. The Longsuffering of God Reveals His Mercy

Peter says the Lord is "longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Longsuffering means He suffers long. He endures long. He holds back judgment longer than sinful men deserve. He bears with provocation, rebellion, hardness, blasphemy, and indifference while still offering mercy.

That is not weakness. That is moral greatness. Any fool can explode in anger. It takes divine perfection to restrain wrath without compromising holiness. God's patience is not carelessness about sin. It is holy mercy giving men space to repent before wrath falls.

Paul says something very similar in Romans 2:4, asking, "despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" There it is again. God's goodness is not meant to encourage presumption. It is meant to lead men to repentance. Every day the rebel wakes up alive is another witness that God has not yet cut him down. Every breath drawn by a Christ-rejecter is breathed on borrowed mercy. Every gospel invitation heard, every sermon attended, every tract received, every Scripture read, every warning given is part of that longsuffering goodness. Men think because they are not yet judged they are somehow safe in their sin. In reality, they are living under patience they do not deserve.

This should do two things to the child of God. First, it should fill him with gratitude, because he too was once under that patience before he came to Christ. None of us got saved because we were quicker, smarter, softer, or less guilty than others. We got saved because God was merciful enough to let us hear the truth before judgment fell. Second, it should make the believer compassionate toward the lost. If God is still extending mercy, then the church has no business becoming colder than God. It can speak hard truth, yes. It can warn plainly, yes. But it must never lose sight of the fact that the very continuance of this age is a witness to the generous patience of God.

3. God Will Have All Men to Be Saved

Paul writes that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). That is one of the clearest declarations in the New Testament concerning the revealed desire of God in the matter of salvation. It does not mean every man will in fact be saved, because Scripture plainly teaches that many reject the truth and perish. But it does mean the heart of God is not against the salvation of sinners. He is not delighting in damnation as though condemnation were His preferred outcome. Ezekiel 33:11 says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." That is consistent all the way through the Book. God warns because He means to warn. God invites because He means to invite.

That truth has to be guarded carefully because some people speak in such a way that the revealed willingness of God toward sinners almost disappears from their language. They talk as if it were somehow improper to say God desires men to be saved, though the Bible says it plainly. The church must say what Scripture says. God will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. Christ "gave himself a ransom for all" (1

Timothy 2:6). The gospel is to be preached to “every creature” (Mark 16:15). “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). The open offer of mercy is not a trick. It is a real call issuing from the heart of a gracious God.

This should shape the spirit of gospel labor. The believer is not working against the grain of God when he seeks the salvation of souls. He is moving in harmony with the revealed desire of God. When he plants the seed of the gospel, he is doing something the Lord is pleased with. When he waters truth into a hearer’s understanding, he is acting in line with what God has plainly said. That should strengthen the hands of every witness. He does not have to wonder whether mercy is somehow contrary to the heart of God. The Bible has already settled the matter. God desires men to be saved. That is why this age still continues with the gospel still sounding out.

4. This Dispensation Continues as an Age of Grace

When men complain about how long things have gone on, they often fail to see what kind of age they are living in. They are living in an age of grace, an age in which God is taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name, preaching reconciliation, and extending the gospel freely. Paul calls it “the dispensation of the grace of God” (Ephesians 3:2). That means the present period is marked by mercy, invitation, gospel preaching, and the free offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. It is not an age without divine government, but it is an age in which grace is being magnified in a peculiar and glorious way. Men who should already be in hell are hearing the gospel instead.

This dispensation is not dragging on because heaven is disorganized. It continues because God is still gathering in souls. Peter says the Lord is longsuffering. Paul says God will have all men to be saved. Put those together and the picture becomes clear. The delay of final judgment is tied to the ongoing extension of mercy. Every day that this age continues, the gospel is still to be preached, the truth is still to be sown, and the saints are still to labor in hope. That ought to keep the church from a wrong kind of fatalism. Yes, the days are evil. Yes, apostasy is real. Yes, the world is ripening for judgment. But the very fact that the church is still here means the gospel door is still open.

This also guards the believer from impatience in ministry. He may look at the darkness of the age and say, why keep planting, why keep watering, why keep witnessing, why keep praying? Because the dispensation itself is still telling you that God has not shut the door yet. The field is still open. The labor is still relevant. The day of salvation is still sounding out. As long as the Lord has not caught away His church and brought the day of wrath in full, the age itself is a testimony that grace is still operating publicly. The Christian who

understands that will not use the lateness of the hour as an excuse to fold his hands. He will use it as a reason to labor harder.

5. Every Day of Delay Is Another Day of Mercy

The church needs to learn to look at time the way Peter describes it. A day that the scoffer calls delay, the saint ought to call mercy. Another day with the gospel still being preached is another day of mercy. Another day with churches still opening the Book is another day of mercy. Another day with parents still teaching children the Scriptures is another day of mercy. Another day in which a sinner can hear, repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is another day of mercy. The delay is not empty. It is loaded with gospel opportunity. It is loaded with divine patience. It is loaded with room for repentance.

That should change the emotional tone of the believer. Instead of merely grumbling over how wicked the world is, he ought also to recognize that the fact the world still stands is proof of the mercy of God. Instead of merely complaining that judgment has not yet fallen, he ought to realize he himself once needed that delay. If the Lord had cut history short before the gospel reached you, where would you be? If He had poured out wrath before that witness came, before that sermon, before that tract, before that friend spoke, before that passage opened, before that conviction struck, what then? The very delay some men mock is the delay that allowed many now-saved saints to come to Christ.

This is why mercy should create urgency, not laziness. Some men abuse mercy. They say, if there is still time, I can take my time. That is exactly backward. The church should say, if there is still time, I must use my time. Since every day of delay is a day of mercy, then every day wasted in passivity is a tragic misuse of that mercy from the standpoint of labor. God's patience should move the saints into the field, not into deeper sleep. If He is still opening the door, then we ought to still be calling men to come in before that door closes.

6. Gospel Labor Agrees with the Heart of God

Some believers act as though zeal for souls must be balanced by suspicion, as though earnest gospel labor were in danger of somehow outrunning the heart of God. The Bible teaches the opposite. Gospel labor is in harmony with the revealed heart of God. If God is not willing that any should perish, if He will have all men to be saved, if Christ commanded the gospel to be preached to every creature, then the church is never more aligned with heaven than when it plants and waters the truth with gospel earnestness. The laborer is not trying to twist God's arm into mercy. He is acting in line with mercy already revealed.

This should settle the conscience of those who wonder whether bold evangelistic labor is somehow too much. No, the church does not save souls. God gives the increase. No, the church cannot regenerate one dead sinner by its own power. But the church is absolutely

commanded to preach, teach, witness, and pray. That work stands in harmony with God's revealed desire for men to come to repentance. A believer handing out the gospel is not meddling with something God is reluctant about. He is participating in the very work this present age was designed to emphasize. That should embolden him. The field is not hostile because God is hostile. The field is needy, and God is merciful.

It should also purify the church's motives. The believer does not plant and water merely to build a ministry report, score numbers, or polish his image as a serious Christian. He does it because he knows the Lord is still showing mercy and that the truth is the appointed means by which that mercy is made known. There is something profoundly holy about labor that moves in step with the revealed desire of God. When the church witnesses, when it teaches, when it prays for souls, when it spreads the Scriptures, it is not engaging in a side hobby. It is moving in the channel where the patience of God is presently flowing.

7. The Patience of God Should Make the Church Urgent

One of the great ironies of modern Christianity is that the patience of God, which ought to make saints urgent, often makes them lazy. Because judgment is not immediate, they start living as though the field can wait. Because the door is still open, they imagine it will always remain open. Because the Lord has not yet come, they settle into routines that have very little to do with the harvest. But Peter's language should produce the opposite effect. If the Lord is being longsuffering, then the church should understand that now is the time for labor. Mercy is not a narcotic. Mercy is a window. And windows close.

Paul says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Not tomorrow, not some vague later, not when the world gets easier, not when the church feels more energetic. Now. The patience of God means now matters. It means this hour matters. It means the witness you could give matters. The truth you could sow matters. The child you could teach matters. The saint you could strengthen matters. The prayer you could offer matters. The church is not waiting in an empty hallway. It is standing in a doorway of mercy with work to do.

That urgency should never become fleshly panic, but it should be real urgency. The believer should feel the weight of time. He should know that every lost soul he sees is standing in an age of mercy that will not go on forever. He should know that the Lord's patience has a holy end point. Peter moves from longsuffering in verse 9 to "the day of the Lord" in verse 10 for a reason. Mercy now. Judgment then. Opportunity now. Reckoning then. Therefore, if the church has any sense at all, it will not let the patience of God lull it to sleep. It will let the patience of God send it out with the truth while mercy still holds the door.

Conclusion

God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The Lord will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. Those are not weak verses. They are glorious verses. They reveal the heart of God in this present age and explain why the promise has not yet broken into final judgment. The delay is not slackness. The delay is longsuffering. The delay is mercy. The delay is the patience of a holy God who is still extending the gospel invitation before the day of wrath comes in full. Every day this age continues is another witness to that mercy.

That truth should humble the saved saint, because he himself once stood under that same patience before he came to Christ. It should also move him into greater labor, because the continuance of mercy means the field is still open. Gospel labor is not contrary to the heart of God. It is in harmony with the revealed desire of God. When the church plants the seed and waters the truth, it is moving in the very stream of mercy that this dispensation displays. That is why the work matters so much. The age of grace is not empty waiting time. It is harvest time under the longsuffering hand of God.

So the charge in this essay is plain. Stop calling delay weakness. Call it mercy. Stop treating another day as ordinary. See it as a fresh witness to the patience of God. And since every day of delay is another day of mercy, use it. Plant the truth. Water the truth. Pray for souls. Preach the gospel. Strengthen the saints. Speak while the door is open. Because the Lord who is patient now will not remain forever in the posture of delay. The day of the Lord will come. But until it does, every extra day stands as a solemn and glorious reminder that God is still giving men room to repent.

9 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – Be Not Weary in Well Doing

Main Passage: “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Galatians 6:9)

Introduction

There is a kind of weariness that only shows up when a man has actually been doing something for God. The lazy man talks about burnout when he has hardly lifted a finger. The spectator says he is tired when all he has done is listen, scroll, criticize, and drift. But the laborer knows another kind of weariness. He knows what it is to pray for somebody until his words feel worn thin. He knows what it is to witness again and again and watch hard faces give him nothing back but a polite nod, an empty stare, or a smart-mouthed answer. He knows what it is to teach the same truth more than once because the hearer did not really hear it the first time. He knows what it is to pour out, to care, to stay, to repeat, to endure,

and then to wonder in some late hour whether anything is really happening at all. That is the weariness Galatians 6:9 addresses. It is not the fatigue of idleness. It is the fatigue of faithful labor in a field where fruit is not always visible.

Paul says, “And let us not be weary in well doing” (Galatians 6:9). He says that because well doing can make you weary. If it could not, the command would not be needed. The Holy Ghost does not waste His breath. He knows the strain of service. He knows the discouragement that comes when a man plants the truth into hard ground and sees no blade rise up for months or years. He knows the burden of watering saints who ought to be farther along than they are. He knows the frustration of repetition, the ache of delayed fruit, the sorrow of watching some people resist what could help them, and the temptation to pull back emotionally just to spare your own nerves. That is all part of real ministry in a fallen world. The Bible never denies it. It speaks right into it.

This essay has to do that very thing. It has to speak to the weary laborer who has not quit outwardly, but has felt the pull to quit inwardly. It has to remind him that not every planted seed sprouts on his preferred schedule and not every watered soul shows visible growth as quickly as he hoped. It has to say plainly that perseverance matters deeply in the work of God because God’s timetable is not ours. “In due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9). Due season belongs to the Lord. He knows when the root is taking hold under the surface. He knows when the ground is softer than it looks. He knows when the hidden work is farther along than any eye can see. So this chapter is for the laborer who is tired, tempted, and pressed, but not yet done. It is a call to keep sowing, keep watering, keep praying, and keep standing because the God who gave the command also controls the season.

1. Well Doing Really Can Make a Man Weary

The first thing that needs to be said plainly is that weariness in ministry is real. It is not always unbelief, cowardice, or carnality. Sometimes it is simply the cost of having stayed in the work long enough to feel its strain. Paul did not tell the Galatians, “Since you are spiritual, you will never feel tired.” He said, “let us not be weary in well doing” (Galatians 6:9). That means well doing and weariness can meet in the same soul. You can be doing the right thing and still feel worn thin. You can be faithful and still feel the drag of discouragement. You can be in the will of God and still know the heaviness that comes from prolonged labor in a hard field.

Elijah knew that kind of weariness. After standing against the prophets of Baal and seeing the fire of God fall, he still found himself under a juniper tree asking the Lord to take away his life (1 Kings 19:4). That was not because he had been lazy. It was because he had been

in the fight. Paul knew that kind of weariness too. He spoke of being “in labours more abundant,” “in weariness and painfulness,” “in watchings often” (2 Corinthians 11:23, 27). The Bible does not present the servants of God as emotionless machines. It presents them as real men carrying real burdens while upheld by real grace.

That should help a weary laborer stop condemning himself merely for feeling the load. The issue is not whether he feels weariness. The issue is what he does when it comes. The command is not “never feel tired.” The command is “faint not.” Weariness may knock on the door, but it does not have to take the house. The believer may feel the strain without surrendering to it. He may be honest about the burden without abandoning the field. The Bible does not shame the laborer for finding the work heavy. It strengthens him so the weight does not drive him out.

2. Hard Ground Discourages the Sower

One great cause of weariness is hard ground. The sower goes out with seed, but not every patch of earth welcomes it. Jesus said some seed fell “by the way side” and was trodden down, and the fowls devoured it (Luke 8:5). That is ministry language for hearts so hardened, distracted, or resistant that the truth barely gets in before the devil steals away what was heard. Any believer who has tried to witness to stubborn men knows that feeling. He speaks, and it is as though he is throwing seed at pavement. The words land, but there seems to be no penetration. The hearer is busy, bored, hostile, proud, or spiritually numb, and the laborer comes away wondering whether anything even reached the conscience.

That can wear a man down if he is not careful. He starts anticipating resistance before he even opens his mouth. He begins to protect himself by lowering his expectations or withholding his burden. He may still say the words, but some of the heart starts draining out of the effort because hard ground has disappointed him too many times. Jeremiah knew something of that burden. He preached to a stiff-necked people until he felt the emotional exhaustion of being rejected by the very ones he longed to help. He said, “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name” (Jeremiah 20:9). That is the language of a weary preacher pressed by resistance.

But Jeremiah did not stay there, because the Word of God burned in him “as a burning fire shut up in my bones” (Jeremiah 20:9). The lesson is not that hard ground disappears. The lesson is that the sower must not let hard ground teach him to stop sowing. The condition of the soil does not redefine the duty of the laborer. Some seed falls on hard places before it ever reaches good ground. Some truth must strike a conscience more than once before it breaks through the crust. The laborer is not called to predict perfectly where the response

will come. He is called to sow. Hard ground discourages him, yes, but it must not silence him.

3. Little Visible Response Can Tempt a Man to Faint

Another source of weariness is the pain of seeing little visible response. A laborer can handle a lot if he can see some sign of movement. But often ministry gives him long stretches in which the field appears almost motionless. He speaks, teaches, prays, corrects, exhorts, waters, warns, and waits, and yet sees very little outwardly to tell him the work is advancing. That is when fainting starts whispering. Not dramatic quitting perhaps, but inward slackening. The soul begins to say, "What is the use?" That question has weakened more laborers than open persecution has.

The psalmist felt something like that when he said, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13). Notice that. Fainting was not theoretical. It was near enough to mention. What kept him from it was faith. He believed in something beyond his immediate sight. That is exactly where the weary laborer must live. If he lives only by visible response, he will be up one week and down the next, encouraged one hour and deflated the next. Ministry becomes emotionally unlivable when it is tied too tightly to what can be counted in the short term.

This is why Galatians 6:9 is so important. Paul does not say, "Do not be weary because you will always see quick results." He says, "for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." In other words, visible response is not the clock by which the believer measures the certainty of harvest. God's promise is the clock. Due season is not always immediate season. The blade does not always break the surface the day the seed goes in. Sometimes the Lord is doing subterranean work the laborer cannot see. The absence of quick proof is not proof of absence. That is where faith must hold the soul steady.

4. Repetition Is Part of Watering, and Repetition Is Tiring

There is a particular strain in ministry that comes from repetition. You tell the truth once, then again, then again. You answer the same kind of confusion more than once. You remind believers of what they already know because what they know has not yet gripped them as deeply as it needs to. Peter said, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them" (2 Peter 1:12). That is watering language. But if we are honest, repetition can be tiring. The flesh likes novelty. The flesh likes breakthroughs. The flesh likes the feeling of having "covered new ground." But spiritual nourishment often comes through old truth restated with fresh necessity.

Parents know this. Teachers know this. Pastors know this. The same principle may have to be explained with different wording over time because the hearer has not yet fully received

it. A saint can hear about grace and still drift back toward legal fear. He can hear about prayer and still need to be urged toward prayer again. He can hear about holiness and still need correction when compromise creeps in. He can hear about forgiveness and still wrestle with bitterness. The waterer cannot say, “Well, I said it once in 2019, so my job is done.” Real ministry returns to truth because people need repeated nourishment.

The frustration comes when the laborer starts feeling like a broken record in a world addicted to new sounds. But God is not impressed by novelty for its own sake. Paul told the Philippians, “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Philippians 3:1). Safety often lies in repetition. Stability often comes through hearing again what should never have been forgotten. The weary laborer must remember that repetition is not failure. It is part of watering. If a field needs moisture more than once, no sane farmer curses the water for repeating itself. He knows the repetition is part of the growth.

5. God’s Timetable Is Not Ours

The great comfort in Galatians 6:9 is the phrase “in due season.” It does not say “in your preferred season,” “in immediate season,” or “in the season most flattering to your patience.” It says “in due season.” Due season is the season God knows to be right. He knows when the crop is ready. He knows when the hidden process has matured to the point of visible fruit. The laborer, by contrast, often wants instant correlation between effort and outcome. He plants on Tuesday and wants sprouts by Thursday. He waters for three weeks and wants a harvest report on the fourth. That is not how the field of God always works.

Ecclesiastes says, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). That includes ministry purposes. God is never late to His own harvest. He is never careless with His own field. He knows when to bring conviction, when to soften a heart, when to restore a wandering saint, when to deepen a root, and when to let a season of waiting humble the laborer who is involved in the process. A lot of discouragement comes from trying to force divine seasons to line up with human impatience. The believer looks at the clock; God looks at the crop.

That does not mean the laborer becomes passive. It means he becomes patient without becoming lazy. He still plants. He still waters. He still prays. He still teaches. He still shows up in the field. But he stops acting as though the invisible timetable of God must be rushed to accommodate his nerves. James says, “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth” (James 5:7). A husbandman who cannot wait is a hazard to his own field. So is a Christian laborer who cannot submit to due season.

6. Not Every Seed Sprouts Quickly and Not Every Soul Shows Growth Fast

A great deal of unnecessary discouragement in ministry comes from unrealistic expectations. Men know in theory that growth takes time, but in practice they still expect immediate outward proof of everything. Yet the Lord's own parables warn against that kind of shallow thinking. In Mark 4, Jesus speaks of seed growing, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:28). That is progression. That is process. That is one stage leading to another under God's secret operation. The field does not skip straight from seed to harvest just because the sower is eager.

The same principle applies to souls. Not every planted seed sprouts immediately. Sometimes a gospel witness lies in the conscience for years before fruit appears. Not every watered soul shows visible growth at once. Some saints are slower, weaker, more confused, more wounded, or more distracted than others. Some are fighting battles the laborer does not fully see. Some look stagnant while roots are going down in ways that will matter later. The laborer must not confuse slow growth with no growth every single time. Sometimes he is watching winter and assuming spring will never come.

That should make him both careful and hopeful. Careful, because he must not waterlessly flatter himself and pretend all delay is healthy. Some cases do require sharper warning and correction. But hopeful, because he must not write people off too soon simply because they do not progress on his schedule. The Lord bears long with His people. The laborer must learn something of that spirit. Paul said he travailed "in birth again until Christ be formed" in the Galatians (Galatians 4:19). That is not the language of a man expecting instant polish. That is the language of a servant willing to labor painfully while formation takes place.

7. Perseverance Matters Because Fainting Stops the Reaping

Galatians 6:9 ends with a condition: "we shall reap, if we faint not." That means perseverance is not some optional ornament in the work of God. It matters deeply. The believer does not reap by quitting. He does not arrive at harvest by abandoning the field in the middle of the season. A man may feel weary and still remain in place. But if he faints, if he gives up, if he lets discouragement shut down obedience, then he steps away from the very path on which harvest was promised. The verse does not flatter impulsive religion. It honors staying power.

This is one reason the devil works so hard to wear saints down rather than merely frighten them. He knows many believers will not deny the Lord outright, but he may be able to drain them into passivity, detachment, cynicism, or emotional retreat. If he can make the sower believe the ground is too hard, or the waterer believe repetition is useless, he can weaken

the labor without ever having to disprove the truth. That is why perseverance is spiritual warfare. Endurance in the field is not glamorous, but it is strategic. “Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). That is how the saints answer weariness.

Perseverance also glorifies God because it says something about His worth. It says He is worthy of service even when the field is not flattering. It says His promise is stronger than our moods. It says His timing is wiser than our frustration. It says the laborer’s confidence is not finally in his own visible success but in the character of the God who called him. The weary saint who keeps planting, keeps watering, keeps praying, keeps showing up, and keeps believing God in the dark season is preaching a sermon with his life. He is saying, “The Lord is still worth obeying even before I can see the harvest.”

Conclusion

“Be not weary in well doing” is not a soft little greeting-card verse for people who need a mild boost. It is a battlefield command for laborers tempted to faint under the real strain of ministry. It speaks to the one sowing into hard ground, the one watering with little visible response, the one tired of repetition, the one tempted to think the delay means the work is wasted. The Holy Ghost knows all of that. And He answers it, not with flattery, but with promise: “for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9). The certainty is there. The season is there. The condition is there. Stay in the field.

That means the weary laborer must learn to let God own the timetable. He must stop demanding instant sprouts from every seed and visible maturity from every soul on his personal schedule. He must remember that the Lord often works below the surface before anything breaks into sight. He must remember that repetition is part of watering, patience is part of labor, and hidden growth is still growth when God is involved. Not every silence means failure. Not every delay means barrenness. Sometimes due season is just still on its way.

So the charge of this essay is plain. Do not faint. Do not let hard ground make you silent. Do not let slow fruit make you cynical. Do not let repetition make you careless. Keep planting the Word. Keep watering with truth. Keep praying in hope. Keep standing in your place. Because when the Lord says there will be a reaping in due season, He is not guessing. And when that season comes, the laborer who stayed in the field will find that not one act of faithful service done for the glory of God was ever wasted.

10 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – Prayer in the Work of the Harvest

Main Passage: “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:38)

Introduction

One of the biggest mistakes Christians make in ministry is treating prayer like the warm-up act before the real work starts. They think the real work is preaching, teaching, witnessing, discipling, correcting, exhorting, organizing, and speaking, and prayer is the polite little religious ribbon tied around the package so everything sounds spiritual. But the New Testament will not let you get away with that. In the Bible, prayer is not a side dish to the labor. Prayer is woven into the labor. Prayer is not separate from planting and watering. Prayer is one of the chief ways a man plants and waters while confessing he cannot make anything live. If God alone gives the increase, then prayer is not optional ceremony. It is the laborer’s open admission that the increase is out of his hands and in God’s.

That is why Jesus Christ, after saying, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few,” immediately said, “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38). He did not say, “Study better branding.” He did not say, “Improve the experience.” He did not say, “Run a tighter campaign.” He said pray. That tells you right away that prayer belongs in the very center of the harvest work. The Lord of the harvest must be sought because the harvest belongs to Him, the laborers must be sent by Him, the field is governed by Him, and the increase only comes from Him. A church may have all the right machinery and still have no prayer. If so, it is a machine pretending to be a ministry.

This essay needs to press that truth hard because a lot of believers say with their lips that God gives the increase, but then live as though technique gives the increase, personality gives the increase, pressure gives the increase, or persistence alone gives the increase. Prayer corrects that lie. Prayer is humility speaking to God. Prayer is dependence kneeling before God. Prayer is the preacher admitting that no sermon of his can regenerate one dead sinner. Prayer is the teacher admitting that no clarity of explanation can create spiritual appetite. Prayer is the parent admitting that no amount of loving instruction can force life into the heart of a child. Prayer is one of the chief ways the waterer leans on heaven while laboring on earth. It is not the opposite of labor. It is one of the purest forms of labor in the whole field.

1. Prayer Belongs to the Harvest by Christ’s Own Command

The first thing that must be established is that prayer is not a human preference added to ministry. It is Christ’s command in relation to ministry. “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:38). That means

prayer is not merely devotional background music. It is harvest instruction from the mouth of Jesus Christ. The context is not private mysticism. The context is the plenteous field and the shortage of laborers. So when Christ addresses the harvest problem, He puts prayer right in the middle of the answer. That alone ought to silence the idea that prayer is somehow secondary to “actual ministry.”

Notice also that the Lord did not separate the need from the act of seeking God. He did not say, “The harvest is plenteous, so go build something impressive.” He said, “Pray ye therefore.” Therefore means prayer follows from the need itself. The field demands it. The shortage of laborers demands it. The largeness of the harvest demands it. A believer who sees the field rightly and does not pray is not seeing the field the way Christ sees it. The more serious the harvest becomes in the mind, the more necessary prayer becomes in the life. Prayer is the reflex of a soul that has finally understood that the work is too big for man.

That also means churches which downplay prayer are revealing something ugly about their theology whether they know it or not. They may say they believe in God’s power, but if prayer is consistently marginal, then deep down they trust something else more. They trust organization, talent, atmosphere, communication strategy, or personality. The church that really believes Christ’s words will not treat prayer meetings like the least important event on the calendar. It will know that prayer is one of the ways the church enters the field under orders from the Lord of the harvest.

2. If God Gives the Increase, Prayer Is Necessary

This whole series has kept returning to 1 Corinthians 3:6, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” If that verse is true, and it is, then prayer is necessary by simple logic. If God gives the increase, then those who plant and water must look to God for it. That is what prayer is. It is the planter and waterer turning their faces toward heaven and saying, “Lord, do what I cannot do.” A man can speak to ears, but only God can open hearts. A man can explain the gospel, but only God can bring conviction. A man can teach doctrine, but only God can make that doctrine live with force and reality in the inner man. The moment that is truly understood, prayer stops looking optional and starts looking inevitable.

This is where a lot of ministry becomes fleshly without meaning to. Men keep all the correct language in their doctrinal statements, saying God saves souls and God gives increase, but in practice they operate as though results are produced by enough activity piled together. So they rush past prayer in order to get on with what they think is the real work. But if the increase belongs to God, then bypassing prayer is not efficiency. It is arrogance. It is saying in action what men would never dare say out loud, namely, “I can handle the crucial part.”

No, you cannot. The crucial part is the part only God can do, and prayer is the confession that you know it.

Paul understood that connection. He planted churches, preached relentlessly, wrote doctrine, warned, exhorted, corrected, and suffered. Yet he was always praying. He told the Colossians, “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you” (Colossians 1:9). Why? Because he knew that the work could not be reduced to information transfer. He needed God to fill them with knowledge, strengthen them with might, and make the truth fruitful in their lives. Prayer was not separate from his labor. It was part of the labor because Paul knew the decisive increase did not lie in Paul.

3. Prayer Accompanies Seed-Sowing

Prayer belongs right alongside seed-sowing. When a believer goes out with the Word of God, he should never imagine that the mere delivery of correct content is enough by itself apart from the blessing of God. The seed must be sown, yes. The sower must speak, yes. But the sower must also pray. He must pray before the seed is sown, while it is being sown, and after it is sown. He must ask God to prepare the ground, to restrain the devil from stealing the Word, to open the understanding, to awaken conviction, and to cause the seed to lodge in the conscience. That is not an addition to sowing. That is part of faithful sowing.

The apostle Paul saw evangelistic work this way. He asked for prayer repeatedly in connection with the spread of the Word. “Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified” (2 Thessalonians 3:1). There it is. He did not merely ask that he would have opportunities. He asked that the Word would run freely and be glorified. That means Paul saw the preaching of the Word and the praying around the Word as linked. A preacher can preach the right sermon and still know that unless the Lord opens the way and empowers the truth in the hearers, nothing eternal will happen. Prayer accompanies sowing because sowing alone does not guarantee fruit.

This ought to reshape personal witnessing too. A believer who shares the gospel without prayer is like a man casting seed while ignoring the sky above him. He may have the seed bag in his hand, but he has forgotten that heaven governs the whole field. Pray before you witness. Pray while you witness in your heart. Pray after you witness. Ask God to bring the words back to memory. Ask Him to trouble the conscience. Ask Him to make the hearer unable to escape the force of the truth. A man cannot save the soul he is speaking to. But he can speak faithfully and pray earnestly, and that is part of what it means to sow under God.

4. Prayer Undergirds Teaching and Discipleship

Prayer is not just for the first contact with the lost. It undergirds the slower work of teaching and discipleship as well. A teacher who imagines that his explanations alone will mature saints has misunderstood the whole business. Spiritual growth is not produced by data transfer. It involves illumination, conviction, remembrance, obedience, strengthening, and inward formation. Those are areas where God must work. That is why Paul prayed for believers even after they were converted. He prayed that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, that they would be rooted and grounded in love, and that they would comprehend spiritual realities more deeply (Ephesians 3:14-19). That is discipleship prayed over, not merely talked about.

This matters because watering often becomes discouraging precisely at the point where prayer is most needed. A teacher explains, re-explains, corrects, clarifies, and encourages, but sometimes the hearer still seems dull, slow, or resistant. That is where a man may be tempted to rely more heavily on pressure, irritation, or manipulation. But prayer checks that fleshly reaction. Prayer reminds the laborer that the soul before him is not a machine to be fixed with sharper torque. It is a person whose inward reception of truth still depends on God's work. So the teacher prays that the Lord will make the truth clear, living, and effectual.

Parents especially need this. A Christian mother or father may faithfully teach the Scriptures at home, yet if they do that without prayer, they will soon start thinking in one of two wrong directions. Either they will assume their teaching guarantees spiritual life, or they will despair when the fruit is not immediate. Prayer saves them from both errors. It lets them teach diligently while remembering only God can make the Word powerful in the child's heart. It lets them water steadily while leaning on heaven. That is one of the chief ways the waterer labors on earth while depending on God above.

5. Prayer Supports Preaching by Seeking What No Sermon Can Force

Preaching is one of the strongest visible forms of labor in the harvest, but no true preacher mistakes the visible force of a sermon for the invisible miracle of spiritual change. A preacher may have liberty, clarity, boldness, and even strong emotional response in the congregation, and still have no real increase unless God works. That is why preaching must be supported by prayer. Paul asked the Ephesians, "praying always" and then specifically added, "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me... that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:18-20). He did not treat preaching and prayer as separate departments. He tied them together. He knew that even the boldness to speak rightly should be sought from God.

Prayer also protects preaching from becoming theatrical. When a man stops praying over his preaching, he becomes more vulnerable to trusting his natural energy, memory, style, delivery, or crowd sense. He may still be orthodox in content, but the center of gravity starts drifting toward self-confidence. Prayer humbles the preacher by forcing him to face what he cannot do. He cannot pierce a hardened conscience by skill alone. He cannot force repentance by volume. He cannot breathe life into dead hearers by rhetoric. He cannot create holy hunger by personality. Prayer makes him admit that preaching without divine help is a man speaking at other men, while real preaching seeks God to speak through His truth into the soul.

That is why churches should pray before preaching, during preaching, and after preaching. Not as a liturgical formality, but as real dependence. The hearers should pray that the Word would have free course. The preacher should pray that the Lord would govern his mouth and empower the truth. Afterward the saints should pray that what was heard would remain, convict, strengthen, and bear fruit. A church that thinks the sermon is enough without prayer is a church drifting toward confidence in flesh. The sermon may be biblical, but if prayer is absent, the attitude of heart is already bending in the wrong direction.

6. Prayer Is Humility in Action

At the heart of prayer is humility. Prayer says something very specific: “I cannot do the decisive thing.” That is why proud men can talk about prayer and still not really pray much. They do not like the posture of dependence. They do not mind the vocabulary of prayer as long as it remains decorative, but they dislike actual neediness before God. But real prayer strips a man. It forces him to acknowledge that no preacher, teacher, parent, church, or soulwinner can force life into the soul of man. That admission is deeply humbling, and it is one reason prayerlessness is often rooted in pride more than busyness.

Jesus taught this plainly in John 15:5, “for without me ye can do nothing.” Not a few things, not the harder things only, but nothing in the sense of nothing spiritually fruitful and abiding apart from His life and power. Prayer is the practical way the believer takes that verse seriously. He bows before God because he knows without Christ he can plant nothing fruitfully, water nothing effectually, and produce nothing lasting. Prayerlessness, on the other hand, behaves as though John 15:5 were a nice sentiment rather than a governing reality. It assumes we can proceed with business as usual and tack God on later.

Humility in prayer also keeps a laborer from bitterness. When a man thinks everything depends on him, he becomes harsh when people do not respond as he hoped. He starts carrying himself like a savior underappreciated by the field. But prayer softens him because it reminds him he is not the savior and never was. He is a servant asking the true Lord of the

harvest to do what he cannot. That takes some poison out of the soul. It helps him keep working without swelling with pride when fruit appears and without collapsing into self-importance when fruit is delayed.

7. Prayer Is One of the Chief Ways the Waterer Leans on Heaven

Watering is a slow, patient, repeated labor, and precisely because it is slow and repeated, it can become mechanical unless prayer saturates it. The waterer teaches, reminds, exhorts, corrects, and encourages. But if he does all that merely horizontally, he will eventually wear himself thin and grow irritated at the slowness of the process. Prayer keeps watering from becoming mechanical because it turns the laborer upward again and again. He is not only talking to people about God. He is talking to God about people. That is one of the clearest marks of a true waterer.

Paul models this constantly. He does not just write doctrine to believers. He tells them what he is praying for on their behalf. He prays that their love will abound, that their knowledge will deepen, that they will stand complete in all the will of God, that they will be established, rooted, strengthened, comforted, and preserved. In other words, Paul waters with truth and waters with prayer. He leans on heaven while laboring on earth. He does not substitute prayer for instruction, but neither does he reduce ministry to instruction without prayer. The two are joined.

That is the balance this essay must leave with the reader. Prayer is not separate from planting and watering, but woven right into the work itself. It accompanies seed-sowing, undergirds discipleship, supports preaching, and pleads for the increase no human hand can produce. It keeps the laborer humble, dependent, and sane. It reminds him that the field belongs to God and the life belongs to God. So if a believer wants to water faithfully, he must learn to keep one hand in the field and one eye toward heaven. He must keep speaking truth to men while pleading with God to make that truth live.

Conclusion

Prayer is not a decorative extra in the work of the harvest. It is one of the central ways the laborer confesses that God alone gives the increase. Christ Himself tied prayer directly to the harvest when He said, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest" (Matthew 9:38). Paul tied prayer directly to preaching, teaching, and the spread of the Word. The whole New Testament assumes that men who plant and water must also pray because the crucial miracle is beyond human power. The seed can be sown and the truth can be taught, but only God can open the heart, awaken conviction, form Christ in the soul, and bring lasting fruit.

That means every laborer must reject the pride that tries to carry on without prayer. The preacher who does not pray is trusting something in himself more than he should. The teacher who does not pray is leaning too heavily on explanation. The parent who does not pray is forgetting that life cannot be forced into a child's soul. The church that does not pray is operating like a machine instead of a body dependent on its Head. Prayer is humility in action. It is the open confession that without the Lord we can do nothing.

So the charge in this essay is simple. Pray before you plant. Pray while you plant. Pray after you plant. Pray while you water. Pray over your preaching, your teaching, your witnessing, your discipling, your parenting, your church, and your field. Do not treat prayer as separate from the work. Make it part of the work. Because one of the chief ways the waterer leans on heaven while laboring on earth is by bowing low before the God who alone can make dead things live and dry things grow.

11 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – When Mammon Replaces Ministry

Main Passage: “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24)

Introduction

There are not many clearer signs of Laodicean rot than when a church starts measuring the blessing of God by the same things a banker, real-estate broker, and car dealer would admire. Bigger income. Better clothes. Nicer houses. More polished buildings. Stronger market visibility. A broader platform. More worldly admiration. More financial language. More “increase” that can be photographed, posted, bragged about, and sold back to the audience as proof that God is moving. That is the spirit of mammon, and it has slithered into modern Christianity wearing a church smile and carrying a Bible verse ripped out of context. Jesus Christ said, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). He did not say it would be difficult. He said it could not be done. One of them will command the heart. One of them will define success. One of them will tell the minister what matters most. And when mammon gets the steering wheel, ministry stops being ministry and becomes a business model wearing religious makeup.

That is exactly what has happened in a great deal of modern church culture. The language may still be vaguely Christian, but the values are unmistakably worldly. Success is defined by expansion, revenue, optics, luxury, visibility, and the ability to turn religion into a lifestyle brand. The Christian becomes a consumer. The church becomes a provider. The preacher becomes a motivational salesman. And the whole operation begins to orbit around

personal enhancement instead of the glory of God in the salvation of souls and the strengthening of saints. Ask that kind of preaching about planting the incorruptible seed of the Word, watering souls patiently with doctrine, praying for labourers, enduring hardship in the harvest, or bearing reproach for the truth, and you will usually get very little. Why? Because those things do not market as well as “your next level,” “kingdom increase,” “unlocking abundance,” and all the other polished phrases that smell more like Wall Street than the upper room.

This essay has to say plainly what a lot of people are afraid to say. When mammon replaces ministry, the church may get richer and become spiritually poorer at the same time. It may get more visible and become less faithful. It may gain customers and lose disciples. It may acquire influence and forfeit power. Biblical success is not measured by luxury, applause, or outward glamour. Biblical increase is measured in spiritual fruit, transformed lives, sound doctrine, holy endurance, the salvation of men and women, and the steady labor of saints who keep sowing and watering while God gives the increase. This chapter is a needed rebuke because Laodicean religion thinks it is “rich, and increased with goods” while not knowing it is “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). If the church does not recover a biblical definition of ministry, mammon will keep preaching sermons under the name of Christ.

1. Mammon and Ministry Are Not the Same Master

Jesus Christ did not leave room for confusion on this point. “No man can serve two masters... Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). That means mammon is not just money in the neutral sense. It is wealth and material gain elevated into a master principle. It is money loved, trusted, chased, and treated as the great interpreter of success. A man may possess money without serving mammon, but once money becomes his measure, his confidence, his ambition, and his lens for judging everything else, mammon has taken the throne. Christ put mammon in the category of a rival master because He knew exactly what it does to the heart. It does not merely sit in the corner as a useful tool. It begins issuing commands.

That is why the church gets into such trouble when it starts talking as though visible prosperity were a reliable sign of spiritual health. Once that happens, mammon has already begun rewriting the theology. Suddenly the wealthy man is assumed to be specially blessed. The successful ministry is assumed to be the large, polished, cash-heavy one. The minister who displays luxury is treated as if his outward abundance proves the favor of God. But the Bible never teaches that formula. The rich fool in Luke 12 had plenty and still lost his soul. Laodicea had goods and was spiritually bankrupt. Demas loved “this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10), and the world he loved did not look like an obvious hellscape at

first glance. Mammon is subtle because it can hide behind religious language while pulling the affections downward.

A believer must understand that the issue is not whether money exists in ministry, but whether money begins to rule ministry. Churches need practical resources. Missionaries need support. Buildings cost money. Printing Scripture costs money. Feeding families costs money. Nobody is denying that. But mammon enters when the obtaining, displaying, expanding, and protecting of wealth becomes central enough to redefine the church's purpose. Once that happens, the ministry may still use the name of Jesus while living under another lord. And Christ said plainly, you cannot serve both.

2. Prosperity Religion Measures Success Like the World Does

One of the surest marks of mammon-centered religion is that it measures success the same way the world measures success. If it is bigger, richer, shinier, more visible, more envied, and more luxurious, then it must be blessed. If it can attract a crowd with the promise of upward mobility, then it must be "working." If the preacher looks expensive, lives expensive, and talks expensive, then people assume he has found the secret of divine favor. But the world thinks exactly that way. The world bows before visible abundance. The world admires polish, luxury, access, and clout. So when the church borrows that same scoreboard, it has already let the world set the terms.

Scripture cuts straight across that entire way of thinking. Paul said, "having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:8). He did not say, "having a luxury brand and increasing quarterly influence, let us call that contentment." He warned that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare" (1 Timothy 6:9). Notice that. The will to be rich is spiritually dangerous. Not merely being rich, but aiming the heart that direction. Why? Because once the pursuit of wealth takes over, it opens the door to foolish and hurtful lusts that drown men in destruction. That does not sound anything like the glossy prosperity message. Paul sounds more like a prophet rebuking it.

This is where the church must get its vocabulary back from the world. If a ministry is large, that may mean God has allowed it to grow, or it may mean men have learned how to market religion to carnally minded people. If a preacher is visible, that may mean God has given him an audience, or it may mean he has learned how to be a religious celebrity. If money comes in, that may be a blessing properly stewarded, or it may be bait drawing the ministry off course. The mere presence of outward success proves nothing by itself. The devil can bankroll a lot of religion if that religion will help him keep men blind.

3. Mammon-Centered Preaching Ignores Planting and Watering

One of the strongest indictments against prosperity-driven preaching is how little it has to say about the actual labor Christ and the apostles emphasized. Listen to enough of it, and you will hear a great deal about increase, favor, enlargement, abundance, and breakthrough, but almost nothing about planting the seed of the Word into the hearts of men. You will hear little about watering souls through doctrine, correction, exhortation, and patient discipleship. You will hear very little about prayer for labourers, burden for the lost, enduring in the harvest, or being spent for the sake of truth. Why? Because those things do not fit a consumer model very well. They require self-denial, patience, holy burden, and labor that may never look glamorous.

Paul's language is the exact opposite of prosperity religion. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). There is no celebrity shine in that verse. There is work, submission, humility, and dependence on God. The prosperity system, by contrast, wants "increase" without seed-sowing, fruit without doctrine, blessing without burden, and influence without the reproach of the cross. It talks as if the Christian life were a ladder into nicer circumstances rather than a call to faithful labor in God's field. It retools church language until even the word "increase" no longer means spiritual fruit but personal advancement.

That is why prosperity religion cannot really center the harvest. The harvest is about souls. The harvest is about truth going out. The harvest is about laborers entering the field. The harvest is about men and women coming to repentance and saints being strengthened in Christ. Mammon-centered preaching is interested in a different crop. It wants more revenue, more buyers, more admiration, more luxury, and more visible proof that the system is lucrative. But once that kind of increase becomes central, ministry has already been replaced by something else.

4. The Church Becomes a Business Model and the Christian a Consumer

When mammon gets into the pulpit, the structure of church life changes even if the doctrinal statement on paper stays the same. The church becomes a business model. It starts thinking in terms of product delivery, market positioning, audience retention, revenue streams, and customer satisfaction. The preaching is shaped to keep people engaged as consumers. The atmosphere is tuned to make the brand attractive. Hard truths get softened because they are bad for the customer experience. Conviction gets diluted because the aim is not to make disciples but to maintain growth. The result is a system that looks efficient and polished while slowly starving souls.

In that kind of system, the Christian becomes a consumer. He comes to get something that enhances his lifestyle, improves his mood, optimizes his image, or affirms his ambitions.

Church becomes a place where his felt needs are serviced, his aspirations are blessed, and his preferences are accommodated. He is rarely called to take up the cross, rarely confronted with eternal realities, rarely burdened for souls, rarely trained to labor, and rarely taught to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He is instead encouraged to see himself as a user of spiritual services. That is not New Testament Christianity. That is baptized consumerism.

The New Testament model is radically different. Believers are “labourers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9). They are members of a body, not shoppers in a spiritual marketplace. They are saints called to ministry, witness, mutual edification, and obedience. The church is not a sales platform. It is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). Once those categories are replaced by commercial instincts, the church may still function outwardly, but it will begin producing customers faster than disciples. And customers are far easier to impress than to sanctify.

5. Biblical Increase Is Spiritual, Not Carnal

If the church is going to reject mammon, it must recover the Bible’s definition of increase. In 1 Corinthians 3, increase is not a private jet, a designer wardrobe, or a larger suburban campus. Increase is what God gives in the field where the Word is planted and watered. It is spiritual growth. It is fruit. It is life. It is the effect of divine blessing on gospel labor. Paul says, “God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6). That increase shows up in souls being saved, saints being established, truth taking root, churches being strengthened, and lives being changed under the hand of God. That is increase heaven recognizes.

Paul writes to the Colossians that the gospel was come unto them “and bringeth forth fruit” (Colossians 1:6). There is the biblical language. Fruit. Not worldly status, but spiritual result. He thanked God for the Thessalonians because “your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (2 Thessalonians 1:3). There is increase. Faith growing. Love abounding. Endurance under persecution. Holiness of life. Soundness of doctrine. Stability under pressure. Those things do not always photograph well for a ministry brochure, but heaven counts them as genuine increase. A soul rescued from darkness is increase. A backslider restored is increase. A church grounded in truth is increase.

This should shame the shallow definitions of success that dominate so much modern religion. A ministry can be poor in cash and rich in fruit. Another can be rich in cash and poor in fruit. One can look impressive to carnal eyes and be nearly barren spiritually. Another can look plain, weak, and uncelebrated and yet be full of the life of God. The question is not, “What makes the biggest impression on the flesh?” The question is, “What

kind of increase is God giving?” If the answer is spiritual fruit, then the ministry is healthy even if it never becomes glamorous. If the answer is merely more money and more visibility, then the whole thing should be examined very carefully.

6. Laodicea Thinks Wealth Proves Health

The most frightening church picture for our age may be Laodicea. “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Revelation 3:17). That is mammon talking in church language. Rich. Increased with goods. Need of nothing. Those are the words of a church evaluating itself by material and visible standards. But Christ’s answer is devastating: “and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). In other words, their self-assessment was the opposite of heaven’s. They thought goods meant health. Christ said goods had helped blind them to their actual condition.

That spirit is all over modern Christianity. A ministry accumulates wealth, expands its footprint, beautifies its image, and gains admiration from the world, and then assumes all of that must mean spiritual vitality. But Laodicea should haunt every such assumption. A church can be rich in resources and poor in truth. Rich in polish and poor in power. Rich in optics and poor in holiness. Rich in attendance and poor in burden. Rich in branding and poor in prayer. The tragedy is not just that Laodicea was blind. The tragedy is that it “knowest not.” It was blind and thought it could see.

That is why this rebuke must be sharp. A church that begins to brag in material increase is already flirting with Laodicean blindness. A believer who thinks wealth automatically signals favor is already using the wrong set of eyes. Christ told Laodicea to buy of Him gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and eye salve (Revelation 3:18). In other words, what they really needed could not be supplied by their present abundance. They needed spiritual riches, spiritual covering, and spiritual sight. That is exactly what mammon cannot give, no matter how loudly it boasts.

7. True Ministry Bears the Marks of the Cross, Not the Spirit of Luxury

When you read Paul, you do not come away thinking ministry was a path to worldly ease. You come away thinking it was a path of labor, suffering, endurance, and being poured out for Christ. He speaks of “weariness and painfulness” (2 Corinthians 11:27), of being “made as the filth of the world” (1 Corinthians 4:13), of dying daily (1 Corinthians 15:31), and of spending and being spent for souls (2 Corinthians 12:15). That does not fit the prosperity narrative at all. Paul did not measure his apostleship by luxury but by scars, faithfulness, doctrine, and fruit under pressure. The marks of true ministry in the New Testament look far more like the cross than like the showroom.

That does not mean every faithful minister must be poor in earthly goods or that material provision is itself suspicious. Scripture never says that. It does mean that the spirit of luxury, self-display, and self-exaltation is profoundly out of step with apostolic Christianity. The Son of man had not where to lay His head (Matthew 8:20). The apostles often lived close to the bone. The saints were taught contentment, stewardship, generosity, and detachment from this world. They were not encouraged to make visible abundance the badge of divine approval. The dominant tone was service, not show.

So the church needs to ask itself a hard question. Does our picture of success look more like Jesus Christ and His apostles, or more like a polished religious executive class? Does our ministry language sound more like “take up his cross” (Matthew 16:24) or more like “upgrade your lifestyle”? Does our burden center on souls, truth, endurance, and holiness, or on influence, growth metrics, and visible abundance? The answer to those questions will reveal whether ministry is still ministry or whether mammon has already moved into the pulpit and begun calling itself blessed.

Conclusion

When mammon replaces ministry, everything gets twisted. The master changes. Success gets redefined. The church becomes a business model. The Christian becomes a consumer. The preacher becomes a salesman. The harvest disappears behind revenue, optics, and lifestyle aspiration. Planting the Word, watering souls, praying for labourers, and enduring faithfully in the field no longer sit at the center. They are displaced by a religion that looks polished, profitable, and impressive while often producing little of the fruit heaven actually values. Christ said plainly, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24), and the church must believe Him.

Biblical success is not measured by larger incomes, nicer possessions, visible luxury, or worldly influence. It is measured by spiritual fruit, transformed lives, sound doctrine, holy endurance, faithful witness, and the salvation of men and women through the truth of God. That is the increase Paul spoke of. That is the fruit the New Testament honors. A poor church with truth, prayer, burden, and fruit may be far richer before God than a wealthy church intoxicated with its own image. Laodicea proves that goods can blind a church while it still calls itself blessed.

So this essay ends with a warning and a call. The warning is that mammon can wear church clothes. It can quote Scripture. It can speak the language of blessing while undermining the very heart of ministry. The call is to come back to the field. Come back to the seed. Come back to prayer. Come back to doctrine. Come back to labor for souls. Come back to a definition of increase that only heaven can fully measure. Because when all the religious

glitter is burned away, the only increase that will matter is what God gave through the faithful planting and watering of His Word for His glory.

12 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – God Gives the Increase, Not Man
Main Passage: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:6)

Introduction

There are verses in the Bible that act like a hammer in the hand of the Holy Ghost, and 1 Corinthians 3:6 is one of them. “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6). That verse does not merely correct error. It demolishes it. It takes the pulpit peacock, the religious performer, the prosperity salesman, the self-anointed empire builder, and the man who talks like his words manufacture reality, and it throws them all flat on their backs. Paul says men plant. Men water. God gives the increase. That means the servant’s role is real, but it is limited. The labor matters, but the miracle does not belong to the laborer. The preacher is not the source. The teacher is not the source. The church is not the source. The eloquence is not the source. The atmosphere is not the source. God is the source.

That truth is badly needed because this generation has learned to speak in ways that border on blasphemy while still sounding “spiritual” to the undiscerning. Men say they can decree outcomes, command blessing, speak things into existence, create breakthrough, generate favor, and release increase as though Genesis 1 had deputized every excited churchgoer to start acting like the Creator. Others may not use the same flashy language, but they still talk as if results are finally secured by their own boldness, skill, methods, branding, or intensity. But the Bible keeps dragging the whole matter back to the same point. God gives the increase. Not man with a microphone. Not man with enough faith in his own speech. Not man with enough organizational genius. Not man with enough pressure tactics. God.

This essay has to press that point with force because it touches the nerve of modern religious arrogance. There is a world of difference between trusting God’s promises and pretending man has God’s power. Faith believes what God said and acts in obedience to it. Presumption pretends the servant can issue creative decrees like the Master. Faith prays, labors, witnesses, teaches, and submits. Presumption boasts, performs, demands, and speaks as though heaven were under human management. The Scripture will not tolerate that confusion. Only God opens hearts. Only God convicts. Only God regenerates. Only

God gives lasting fruit. That does not excuse men from labor. It puts their labor in its rightful place. The laborer is called to work hard in submission to God's will, but he is never called to impersonate God in the process.

1. The Text Says What It Says

The first thing that must be done is simply to let the verse speak with its own authority. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). There are three parts there, and every false system in this area starts tampering with the order. Paul planted. That is human labor. Apollos watered. That is human labor. God gave the increase. That is divine operation. The text does not blur the laborer into the life-giver. It does not say Paul planted and generated life. It does not say Apollos watered and produced fruit. It says God gave the increase. Any doctrine, sermon, slogan, or spiritual sales pitch that confuses that order is already departing from the Word of God.

Then Paul sharpens it further: "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7). That does not mean the planter and waterer are worthless. It means they are nothing as the source of life. Their role is real, but their role is never ultimate. They are instruments, not creators. They are servants, not sovereigns. They are used by God, but they do not become little gods because they are used. This is one reason flesh hates the passage. It strips the halo off the man and places the crown back where it belongs - on God alone.

That should settle a great deal before the argument even starts. If a man says he can create increase by his words, the text says no. If a church acts as though its methods are the source of life, the text says no. If a preacher basks in the impression that his charisma brought the fruit, the text says no. If a believer starts speaking as though boldness itself generates the miracle, the text says no. There is liberty in simply believing the verse as written. Men plant. Men water. God gives the increase. That line keeps the servant humble, the work honest, and the glory where it belongs.

2. Trusting God's Promises Is Not the Same as Pretending to Be God

A sharp doctrinal line must be drawn here, because a lot of confusion hides behind spiritual vocabulary. Trusting God's promises is biblical. Pretending man has God's power is not. Abraham "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief" (Romans 4:20). That is faith. He believed what God said God would do. But Abraham did not start issuing creative decrees into the universe as though his mouth had become the engine of existence. He trusted the Lord. There is all the difference in the world between resting in divine promise and assuming divine prerogative.

Faith says, “God said it, and I believe Him.” Presumption says, “I say it, and therefore reality must obey me.” Faith bows to revelation. Presumption imitates the Creator. Faith submits its desires to God’s will. Presumption acts as though God’s will is merely waiting for a man’s declaration to activate it. The Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Thy will be done” (Matthew 6:10). He did not teach them to replace God’s will with their own verbal authority. Even in Gethsemane He said, “not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). If the sinless Son of God in His humanity modeled submission, what kind of swollen foolishness is it when modern religious talk turns the believer into a little commander of outcomes?

This is not a denial that believers should pray boldly, believe God, stand on His Word, and expect Him to answer according to His promises. They should. But bold faith is not creative sovereignty. A child trusts his father; he does not become his father. A servant acts under authority; he does not become the lord of the house. The believer may claim what God has promised in its right context, but he may never cross the line into speaking as though his own words produce reality by inherent power. That line must be guarded, or faith will be corrupted into sanctified self-exaltation.

3. Only God Opens Hearts

One of the clearest examples in Scripture is Lydia in Acts 16. Paul preached. He spoke the truth. He planted the seed. But the text says of Lydia, “whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14). There it is in black and white. Paul spoke, but the Lord opened the heart. The apostle was faithful in the outward ministry. God was sovereign in the inward miracle. That means even apostolic preaching did not eliminate dependence on divine action. If Paul needed the Lord to open Lydia’s heart, then so does every preacher, teacher, witness, parent, and soulwinner since then.

This single truth destroys a mountain of fleshly boasting. A man may explain the gospel clearly, plead passionately, answer objections skillfully, and present the truth faithfully, but unless the Lord opens the heart, there is no true reception. That should both humble and strengthen the laborer. It humbles him because he cannot claim credit for what only God can do. It strengthens him because the outcome does not finally rest on the perfection of his delivery. He must be faithful, yes. But the deepest movement takes place where only God can reach. The lock is on the inside of the human heart as far as man is concerned, but the Lord has access where no servant does.

This is why prayer and preaching belong together. The preacher must preach, but he must preach as a man who knows he cannot turn the key from the outside. The parent must teach, but teach while crying to God to open the child’s heart. The witness must speak, but

speak while depending on heaven to do what no argument can force. Every time a soul truly receives the truth, the Lord has done something no human hand could accomplish. The church must never lose sight of that, or it will begin confusing good methods with divine power.

4. Only God Brings Conviction of Sin

The Holy Ghost said in John 16:8, “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” That is the ministry of conviction, and it belongs to God. A man can accuse another man and never convict him. He can pressure him, embarrass him, corner him, and emotionally jolt him, but that is not the same as Holy Ghost conviction. Human pressure may produce tears, a temporary reaction, or a religious performance. But conviction that penetrates the conscience with divine seriousness is the work of God. Only the Spirit of God can make a sinner feel the weight of his guilt in the light of God’s holiness in a way that is spiritually real.

This matters because a lot of religious work has learned how to manipulate emotion and then call the result conviction. Men dim lights, swell music, repeat phrases, create pressure, and engineer atmosphere until people respond to a moment, and then they report the whole thing as if heaven moved in power. But emotional pressure is not the same as conviction. Conviction is not man-generated mood. Conviction is God dealing truthfully and piercingly with the soul. On the day of Pentecost, when the men were “pricked in their heart” (Acts 2:37), that was not Peter’s personality pulling off a great emotional campaign. That was the Word of God empowered by the Spirit of God.

This should make every faithful worker careful. He is not called to fake conviction. He is called to preach the truth clearly, let the Word do its work, and trust God to bring the inward reproof. The temptation to substitute human pressure for divine conviction is strong because human pressure gives quicker visible response. But the church must resist it. Better one conscience honestly convicted by God than a hundred people swept into a moment by fleshly engineering. Only God can bring the kind of conviction that leads to real repentance and lasting change.

5. Only God Regenerates

Scripture could not be plainer on this point. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth” (James 1:18). Peter says believers are “born again... by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). Regeneration is the work of God. A dead sinner does not cooperate his way into life by enough emotional movement or religious effort. He is born of God. He is quickened by God. He receives life from above. Men may preach the gospel as the appointed means, but only God imparts the new birth. No preacher has ever regenerated anybody. No church has

ever regenerated anybody. No parent has ever regenerated a child by faithful upbringing alone. Regeneration is divine.

That means the church must stop talking as if verbal formulas, repeated phrases, or polished invitations can produce the new birth by their own mechanism. They cannot. A man may lead another through words of prayer, but the words themselves do not regenerate. Christ said, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7), and when He explained that truth, He compared the Spirit’s work to the wind: mysterious in its movement, real in its effect, and not under man’s control (John 3:8). The laborer is responsible to preach Christ. God is responsible for the miracle of life. That is the biblical order.

This should make a laborer both sober and relieved. Sober, because he cannot cheaply treat salvation as though it were a box he checks with the right script. Relieved, because he does not carry the burden of manufacturing life. He must give the gospel plainly and urgently. He must call men to repentance and faith. But when it comes to regeneration itself, he must stand back from the burning bush and remember he is on holy ground. Birth from above is one of God’s works, not one of man’s productions.

6. Only God Gives Lasting Fruit

There is a kind of result that men can manufacture for a while. They can manufacture excitement. They can manufacture crowds. They can manufacture loyalty to a personality. They can manufacture emotional response. They can manufacture a temporary religious atmosphere. But they cannot manufacture lasting fruit. Jesus said, “I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16). Fruit that remains comes out of abiding in Christ and the operation of God, not the tricks of the flesh.

A man may get a quick response from someone and then brag as if the case were settled, but only time and God’s sustaining work reveal whether there is lasting fruit. That is why ministries obsessed with visible results often become shallow. They prefer numbers over fruit, speed over depth, reporting over reality. But God is not impressed by temporary flashes that vanish with the first heat of temptation. He looks for fruit that remains. Paul wanted to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:28). That is not the language of a man content with momentary reactions. He labored toward enduring spiritual reality.

This is one more reason the laborer must never talk as if he is the source of increase. Even if he sees immediate response, he still cannot guarantee lasting fruit. Only God can carry a soul on in truth. Only God can deepen roots. Only God can preserve, establish, and strengthen in the inward man. The servant may help, teach, water, and exhort, but the

durability of the fruit still returns to God's action. That ought to keep the worker from boasting in quick impressions and drive him to keep depending on the Lord for what lasts.

7. Labor Faithfully, but Never Play God

Because only God opens hearts, convicts, regenerates, and gives fruit, some men swing into passivity and say, "Well then, there is nothing for me to do." That is just another error. Paul did not say, "God gave the increase, therefore I did not plant." He said, "I have planted, Apollos watered" (1 Corinthians 3:6). Men still labor. Men still preach. Men still teach. Men still witness. Men still pray. Men still endure. The fact that God alone gives increase does not cancel the servant's duty. It simply defines the servant's limits. He works hard, but he works as a servant, not as a counterfeit creator.

That is the balance this chapter must protect. The church must attack the arrogance of playing God without falling into the laziness of doing nothing. The believer should be bold in obedience, but humble in theology. He should preach plainly, but never boast as though his words carry divine creative force. He should pray expectantly, but never command reality as if heaven were taking orders from him. He should witness urgently, but never confuse urgency with sovereignty. He should labor with all his might, but always with the consciousness that the decisive work belongs to the Lord.

Paul captured that balance beautifully when he said, "I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). There it is. Labor, yes. Abundant labor, yes. But not self-glory. Not self-deification. Not man as source. Grace working in and through the laborer. That is the right spirit. It is strong without being swollen. It is active without being arrogant. It is bold without pretending to be divine. The laborer who keeps that balance will be useful and sane at the same time.

Conclusion

God gives the increase, not man. That is not a poetic line. It is a doctrinal boundary stone. It separates biblical ministry from religious arrogance. It rebukes the modern habit of talking as though believers can decree outcomes, command blessing, manufacture fruit, and create reality by their own words or force of personality. It keeps trusting God's promises distinct from pretending man has God's power. The servant's role is real, but it is never ultimate. He plants. He waters. God gives the increase. That is the line the church must not cross.

Only God opens hearts. Only God convicts of sin. Only God regenerates the dead sinner. Only God gives lasting fruit that remains. Those truths ought to humble every preacher, every teacher, every parent, every church worker, and every witness. They ought to drive prayer deeper, pride lower, and dependence higher. They ought to make a laborer serious

without making him swollen. And they ought to make the church deeply suspicious of any message that flatters man into acting like a little creator under the banner of faith.

So the right response is not to quit laboring. The right response is to labor faithfully in submission to God's will. Preach the Word. Sow the seed. Water patiently. Pray fervently. Stand boldly. But never, even for one moment, start talking as if the miracle belongs to you. It does not. The field is God's. The life is God's. The fruit is God's. The increase is God's. And the servant is safest, strongest, and most useful when he remembers exactly that.

13 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – The Fleshly Trap of Numbers and Bragging

Main Passage: “So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:7)

Introduction

There is more than one ditch on the side of the road, and a Bible believer had better remember that if he is going to stay balanced. One ditch says souls do not matter much, the harvest is secondary, and ministry is mostly about comfort, prosperity, and making life nicer while you wait for heaven. That ditch is rotten, and we have already dealt with it. But the other ditch is just as dangerous in its own way. It talks a big game about evangelism, soul winning, the harvest, and seeing people saved, but then the flesh sneaks in the back door and turns the whole thing into a scoreboard. It becomes about numbers, reports, visible counts, comparisons, reputations, recognition, and bragging rights. Men start talking as if they are selling eternal life door to door and keeping weekly sales figures for heaven. That is not the Spirit of Christ. That is the flesh climbing into holy work and trying to wear it like a costume.

Now do not miss the point. Zeal for evangelism is right. Burden for souls is right. Preaching the gospel is right. Wanting to see men and women saved is right. Rejoicing when sinners repent is right. The New Testament is full of urgency about the salvation of souls. The problem is not the work. The problem is what the flesh does to the work. The flesh can corrupt anything it touches. It can corrupt doctrine with pride. It can corrupt giving with vanity. It can corrupt prayer with performance. And yes, it can corrupt soul winning with statistics, self-congratulation, and competition. A man can talk constantly about the lost and still be more interested in being known as a great soulwinner than in the actual souls themselves. He can use holy language while feeding an unholy appetite for recognition.

That is why this essay has to strike hard. It has to expose the fleshly trap of numbers and bragging without weakening zeal for evangelism one inch. It has to say plainly that souls are too precious to be turned into trophies, the work of God is too holy to be reduced to a scoreboard, and no laborer has any right to boast as though he manufactured eternal life. “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6). That sentence kills both prosperity pride and soul-winning vanity. It leaves no room for the man who wants to strut around reporting visible results as though he were the source of the miracle. The work is real. The burden is real. The labor is real. But the life is from God, and the glory belongs to God.

1. Zeal for Souls Is Right and Necessary

The first thing that must be established is that zeal for souls is not the enemy. Coldness is the enemy. Indifference is the enemy. Passive Christianity is the enemy. Jesus Christ said, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few” (Matthew 9:37). Paul said, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16). The apostles risked their lives to get the gospel to men. The early church was not embarrassed about evangelism. They did not apologize for burden. They did not act as if urgency were beneath them. So the rebuke in this essay is not against soul winning itself. It is not against outreach, witness, preaching, burden, or desire to see souls saved. All of that is right, and any church that loses it has already started drying up.

In fact, one of the devil’s tricks is to make men so afraid of imbalance that they become harmless. They see abuses in evangelistic culture and conclude that the safest thing is to become quiet, measured, detached, and inactive. That is not balance. That is spiritual paralysis dressed up as discernment. The answer to fleshly zeal is not no zeal. The answer to fleshly zeal is holy zeal. The answer to distorted burden is not no burden. The answer is burden governed by Scripture, humility, and the fear of God. If the church stops caring about souls because some people brag about numbers, then the devil has won twice.

So let it be said without apology: believers ought to care about souls. They ought to witness. They ought to support evangelism. They ought to pray for laborers. They ought to rejoice when someone gets saved. Heaven rejoices over one sinner that repenteth (Luke 15:7), and the church should too. The danger begins when holy joy gets hijacked by fleshly vanity. Then the soul is no longer seen as a precious eternal person in need of Christ, but as a tally mark in someone’s report. That is where the corruption enters.

2. The Flesh Loves to Count What It Can Flaunt

The flesh has a peculiar appetite. It likes things it can display. It likes visible proof that it can point to and say, “Look what I did.” That is why numbers become such a temptation.

Numbers can be useful in their place. The Book of Acts records numbers at times. Three thousand were added in Acts 2:41. About five thousand believed in Acts 4:4. So the mere existence of numerical reporting is not the issue. The issue is the fleshly use of numbers as fuel for self-importance. Once a man starts needing numbers to magnify his own image, those numbers have become spiritually dangerous in his hands.

This is true in every area of life, but it gets especially ugly in ministry because souls are involved. A carnal man can take a genuine blessing from God and twist it into self-advertisement almost overnight. He starts comparing totals, building identity around visible counts, and subtly communicating that he is one of the “serious” laborers because his reports sound bigger than someone else’s. Before long the work is not simply about whether the gospel is going out faithfully. It is about who can tell the most impressive story. That spirit is straight out of the flesh, and it can creep into even very conservative, evangelistic circles if it is not guarded against.

The Lord warned about this kind of thing in another form when He said, “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them” (Matthew 6:1). The issue there was not almsgiving itself, but doing it to be seen. The same principle applies here. Witnessing is right. Reporting may have a place. Rejoicing is right. But once the hidden motive becomes being seen, admired, or validated by the work, the flesh has started drinking from holy wells. It does not matter that the activity itself is a good activity. The motive can still become corrupt.

3. Holy Work Can Still Be Done with Carnal Motives

This is one of the hardest lessons for religious people to learn. Just because the work is right does not mean the worker’s motives are right. A man can preach Christ out of envy and strife; Paul says so in Philippians 1:15. Think of that. Preaching Christ, and yet corrupted by wrong motives. If that can happen in preaching, it can happen in soul winning. A man can knock doors, hand out tracts, give the gospel, and speak about souls while all the while being driven by vanity, competition, pressure, or a craving for approval. The activity may be outwardly orthodox while the inward motor is pure flesh.

That should sober every laborer. It is not enough to ask, “Am I doing the right thing?” He must also ask, “Why am I doing it?” Am I burdened because I love Christ and care about souls? Or am I burdened because I want to be known as one of the serious people? Am I reporting this because it helps the work and glorifies God? Or because I want people to think I am fruitful? Am I excited about the salvation of men, or about the enhancement of my image through association with evangelistic success? Those are not pleasant

questions, but they are necessary questions. The flesh is perfectly willing to stand in the soul-winning line if it can wear a medal at the end of the day.

This is why the fear of God must stay in the work. Souls are not game pieces. Ministry is not a sport. The field of God is not a place for men to build personal brands out of holy labor. If a man forgets that, he can begin to use the language of burden while becoming inwardly swollen. The Lord sees all of it. He sees the tract passed out in love and the tract passed out in self-righteousness. He sees the gospel witness fueled by compassion and the witness fueled by pride. He sees the report given for accountability and the report given for applause. Nothing escapes Him.

4. Competition Corrupts the Spirit of Ministry

One of the surest ways the flesh corrupts soul-winning culture is by turning labor into competition. Once that happens, ministers begin to compare themselves among themselves, and Paul says that is “not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12). The spirit of competition sounds like zeal at first because it seems energetic, driven, and results-oriented. But very often it changes the atmosphere of ministry from holy labor under God into rivalry among men. Instead of one planting and another watering under the same Lord, men start measuring who is “doing more,” who has “more souls,” who has “more impact,” and who can tell the strongest story at the next meeting.

That spirit is deadly because it shifts the center away from Christ and toward human ranking. It does not matter that the ranking is built out of “spiritual” activity. The flesh loves ranking of any kind. Paul asked the Corinthians, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?” (1 Corinthians 3:5). They had turned servants into banners. A competitive soul-winning culture can do the same thing. Men become names. Reports become badges. Certain workers become standards by which all others are measured. Then discouragement, envy, exaggeration, and performance all begin to grow in the same soil.

The body of Christ was never meant to function like that. One plants. Another waters. Another prays. Another teaches. Another supports. Another strengthens. Another speaks to one soul who may not come to Christ for years. Another sees immediate fruit but still depends entirely on God. The moment labor becomes competitive, the saints stop seeing themselves as laborers together with God and begin seeing themselves as contestants. That spirit must be rebuked. It is not holy. It is flesh.

5. Souls Are Precious, Not Trophies

When the flesh gets involved, it turns people into props. The prosperity preacher turns people into customers. The celebrity preacher turns people into an audience. And the

fleshly soul-winning braggart can turn people into trophies. A soul becomes a story to tell, a number to add, a visible proof of usefulness, or a notch in the report. That is a terrible thing because the very people Christ died for get reduced into fuel for someone else's self-image. The church must never get comfortable with that spirit. Souls are precious. Souls are eternal. Souls are not there to make us look fruitful.

Paul's language is much holier than that. He told the Thessalonians, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye" (1 Thessalonians 2:19). Notice the difference. He rejoiced in them, but not like a man polishing trophies. He rejoiced like a spiritual father who had travailed for them. His language elsewhere is even more tender. He says, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). That is not the language of a scorekeeper. That is the language of a laborer carrying burden for real people. The soulwinner who truly understands the work will see souls as weights to be carried, not medals to be displayed.

This does not mean there can never be joy in visible fruit. Of course there should be joy. The New Testament is full of joy when men receive the truth. But joy is one thing and trophy-taking is another. Joy thanks God for mercy. Trophies exalt the human instrument. Joy says, "Look what God has done." Trophies say, "Look what I have done." The difference is not small. It is the difference between worship and vanity.

6. The Increase Belongs to God Alone

This whole matter comes back again to the great leveling truth of 1 Corinthians 3:6-7. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase... So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." That verse kills bragging if a man will let it. How can a laborer boast as though he manufactured eternal life when the text says God gave the increase? How can a soulwinner strut over visible response as though he had personally generated repentance, faith, regeneration, and lasting fruit? He did not. He may have been used. Thank God for that. But being used is not the same as being the source.

This should purify the whole atmosphere of evangelistic labor. It should not weaken urgency. It should not cool burden. It should not reduce the importance of witness. It should simply put all the glory back where it belongs. A man may plant the seed faithfully. Another may water patiently. Another may pray. Another may teach afterward. But whenever a soul truly comes to Christ, God has done what no man could do. The heart was opened by the Lord. The conviction was wrought by the Spirit. The new birth came from above. The lasting fruit is sustained by divine grace. So where exactly does the laborer find room to boast?

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:31, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” There is the right place for boasting. Glory in the Lord. Rejoice in the mercy of God. Thank Him for letting you have any part in the work at all. Marvel that He would use earthen vessels. But do not steal what belongs to Him by acting as though visible fruit has crowned you as some kind of spiritual manufacturer. The increase belongs to God alone, and that truth ought to keep every servant low at the feet of Christ.

7. True Faithfulness Is Better Than Impressive Reports

A lot of men want impressive reports because reports can be heard by other men. Faithfulness, by contrast, is often hidden. A saint may witness for years with little visible response and still be utterly faithful before God. A parent may pour Scripture into children with tears and prayer and see very slow fruit, yet be exactly where God wants him. A pastor may labor in a hard place where visible numbers do not flatter him, yet be feeding the flock with sincerity and truth. Another man may have flashy reports and a corrupt spirit. Which one does heaven value more? The answer is obvious if a man fears God at all.

The judgment seat of Christ will burn away a great deal of religious packaging. What will matter there is not how impressive a man sounded when reporting his activity, but whether he was faithful, humble, truthful, and obedient in the work assigned to him. “It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2). Not spectacular. Not admired. Not constantly celebrated. Faithful. That word is one of the great words of the Christian life because it keeps the eye off comparison and puts it back on stewardship. Did you do what God gave you to do? Did you do it in dependence on Him? Did you handle souls like they mattered?

That should free the sincere laborer from both pride and despair. He does not have to puff himself up over visible fruit, and he does not have to collapse when visible fruit is delayed. He can stay at his task. He can keep planting, watering, praying, and speaking the truth in love. He can let God own the increase and the timing. And when there is reason to rejoice, he can rejoice without making himself the center of the story. That is holy labor. That is clean ministry. That is soul winning without the stink of the flesh on it.

Conclusion

The fleshly trap of numbers and bragging is dangerous precisely because it grows right next to good work. Evangelism is right. Zeal for souls is right. Rejoicing in salvation is right. But the flesh can invade even holy labor and twist it into vanity, competition, self-congratulation, and scoreboard religion. Men can talk constantly about souls and still be more interested in recognition than redemption. They can give glowing reports and still

have a heart swollen with pride. That is why the church must keep a close watch on itself in this area. Not to cool evangelism, but to cleanse it.

Souls are too precious to be treated like trophies. The work is too holy to be reduced to statistics for applause. And the doctrine is too clear to allow men to boast as though they created eternal life. "God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). That one sentence ought to crush the whole culture of fleshly bragging. The laborer may plant. The laborer may water. The laborer may be used in wonderful ways. But the miracle belongs to God. The glory belongs to God. The fruit belongs to God. The life belongs to God.

So the call in this essay is plain. Keep your zeal for souls. Keep your burden for evangelism. Keep witnessing, preaching, teaching, and praying. But keep your heart low before God while you do it. Refuse competition. Refuse vanity. Refuse the need to impress men with reports. Rejoice when souls are saved, but rejoice in the Lord. And remember that the holiest laborer in the field is not the one with the most impressive story to tell about himself, but the one who can say with a clear conscience that he handled the work, the souls, and the glory as though they all belonged to God - because they do.

14 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – Different Callings, One Field
Main Passage: "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." (1 Corinthians 3:8)

Introduction

One of the quickest ways to get out of the will of God is to spend your life trying to be somebody else in the field instead of being faithful in the place where God put you. The flesh is never satisfied with simple obedience. It wants comparison. It wants imitation. It wants the spotlight on whatever looks biggest, loudest, most visible, and most admired. So one saint starts despising his own place because he is not Paul. Another starts minimizing her usefulness because she is not on a platform. Another begins envying the labor of someone whose calling looks more public, more dramatic, or more celebrated. But the Holy Ghost cuts right through that vanity when He says, "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one" (1 Corinthians 3:8). One. Not the same in function, but one in the work. One in the field. One under the same Lord. One in the same divine purpose.

That truth matters because the body of Christ was never designed to run on one personality, one gift, one office, or one visible type of labor. God did not build His church like a stage with one star in the center and everybody else clapping around him. He built it

like a body. He built it like a field tended by many hands. He built it so that one man might plant, another might water, another might strengthen, another might pray, another might teach quietly, another might help carry the work, another might support, another might witness one on one, another might guide a child, another might open a home, and another might encourage a weary saint in secret. The flesh sees difference and starts ranking it. God sees difference and assigns it.

This essay is meant to gather those different callings into one picture and show that God uses different servants in different ways all through His field. Paul, Apollos, Philip, Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila, faithful women who labored in support and service, pastors, teachers, parents, and ordinary witnesses all have their place in the Book. Not every servant plants the same way, and not every servant waters the same way. Yet all can be faithful in the place God has assigned them. That is the point. The goal is not uniformity of function. The goal is unity of faithfulness. The church needs to recover the joy of many-handed labor under one Master. When that truth gets settled, envy weakens, pride shrinks, useless comparison dies, and believers start thanking God that His field is bigger than one gift and broader than one kind of servant.

1. Paul and Apollos Show Different Functions Under One Lord

The clearest starting point is the very text that anchors this whole series. Paul says, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6). That means from the beginning God wanted His people to understand that different laborers may fulfill different functions in the same field. Paul was foundational in Corinth. He came in with the gospel, laid truth down, broke the ground, and planted the seed. Apollos came afterward and watered what had been planted. He strengthened, nourished, clarified, and helped develop what God had already started there. Different functions, same field. Different labor, same Lord. Different service, same increase from God.

What is striking is that Paul does not resent the difference. He does not speak as though Apollos were a lesser man because he watered. Neither does he act as though his own planting made him the permanent center of the work. He says, “Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one” (1 Corinthians 3:8). There is the mind of the Spirit. Not rivalry, but unity. Not competition, but cooperation. The flesh wants to ask which one was more important. The Holy Ghost says both were one in the work and each would “receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1 Corinthians 3:8). God does not need the church’s comparison charts to assign value.

That should correct a great deal of foolishness in modern Christianity. Some believers act as though the only “real” work is the work they personally admire most. Others think visible

labor is always superior to quieter labor. But Paul and Apollos destroy that whole ranking system. The planter needs the waterer. The waterer depends on the planted seed. Both are necessary. And neither one gives the increase. That keeps each servant from becoming proud and keeps the church from building personality cults out of different gifts.

2. Philip Shows the Place of the Ready Witness

Philip is one of the finest examples in Scripture of a man who was ready to be used wherever God opened the door. In Acts 8 he preached in Samaria and saw the Lord bless the work, but then the angel of the Lord sent him toward a desert road for one Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-35). That is remarkable. A man could easily say, “Lord, why pull me away from a broad public work to speak to one man in a chariot?” But Philip went. He ran thither. He opened Isaiah. He preached Jesus. That is planting in a very personal and direct form. The same servant who could preach publicly could also speak privately when God narrowed the field down to one soul.

Philip’s example matters because it shows that God uses some servants with a kind of evangelistic readiness that is flexible and immediate. They may not always be laying long doctrinal foundations like Paul. They may not always be doing patient follow-up work like Apollos. But they have a holy alertness to openings for direct witness. Philip did not need a spotlight, a committee, a polished setting, or a full service atmosphere to obey. He needed a command from God and an open Scripture. That is a glorious pattern. Some of the most useful laborers in God’s field are like that. They are ready in motion, ready in public, ready in private, ready with one soul, ready with many, ready to speak Christ where God points.

This should help believers see that not every planter works the same way. Some plant through broad preaching. Some plant through direct conversation. Some plant through public declaration. Some plant through a single well-placed Scripture to one prepared heart. Philip was not Paul, but he was useful. He was not Apollos, but he was faithful. The field needed him exactly as God made and sent him. That same principle still stands. A believer does not have to mimic another man’s exact method to be scripturally faithful if he is obeying God with the truth in the place assigned.

3. Timothy Shows the Place of the Faithful Strengtheners

Timothy is not presented in Scripture primarily as a flashy public figure. He appears again and again as a faithful strengthening laborer. Paul says of him, “I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state” (Philippians 2:20). That is a remarkable testimony. Timothy cared. Timothy was sent to establish, exhort, remind, and help the churches. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 3:2 that Timothy was sent “to establish you, and to comfort you

concerning your faith.” There is watering work in its pure form. There is discipleship. There is patient strengthening. There is the labor of reinforcing truth and helping believers stand.

Timothy’s calling is important because not every servant is built for front-edge evangelistic work in the same way. Some are especially suited to stabilization, follow-up, and doctrinal strengthening. They come into situations where truth has already been planted, and they help it take root. They help churches become more steady. They remind saints of what they have learned. They guard against drift. They maintain doctrine. They stay with the work after the initial excitement has cooled. That kind of labor does not always get celebrated by fleshly religion, but heaven sees its value. A church with planters and no Timothys will often become noisy but unstable.

This should encourage believers whose labor feels less dramatic than the work of more visible evangelists. Timothy was no spiritual lightweight. He was essential. Paul trusted him deeply. Some of the most valuable labor in the body of Christ is done by those who quietly strengthen, clarify, establish, and steady the saints. Not every servant is sent to break new ground. Some are sent to keep planted truth from drying up. That is no small calling. It is part of how God tends His field.

4. Priscilla and Aquila Show the Power of a Faithful Pair

Priscilla and Aquila are a beautiful example of how God uses a faithful pair working together in truth. In Acts 18, when they heard Apollos speaking, they recognized that he knew truth, but not yet fully. So “they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26). That is quiet, wise, personal watering. They did not build a public scene. They did not turn the moment into a contest. They did not belittle the man. They took him aside and helped him. That is the kind of work that often keeps the field from suffering damage. It is mature, careful, constructive labor.

They also labored with Paul in other ways. Paul calls them “my helpers in Christ Jesus” (Romans 16:3). The word helpers matters. Not celebrities. Not empire builders. Helpers. There is a greatness in that word that the flesh does not appreciate. The helper is often indispensable while remaining largely uncelebrated. Priscilla and Aquila used their home, their understanding, their courage, and their support in the work of God. They illustrate that some of the most fruitful ministry happens through couples and households that quietly give themselves to truth, hospitality, guidance, and strengthening.

This ought to encourage married believers and households that wonder whether their work matters if it is not publicly visible. It matters immensely. A home that serves truth is not a small thing. A husband and wife who labor together with discernment, hospitality, and biblical care can influence far more than the flesh imagines. Not every calling is pulpit-

centered. Some callings are home-centered, support-centered, and person-to-person. But if the truth is being advanced and saints are being strengthened, God is using that labor in His field.

5. Faithful Women Show the Beauty of Essential Support Labor

The New Testament repeatedly honors faithful women who labored in the work even when their labor did not take the same public form as apostolic office. Paul speaks in Philippians 4:3 of women “which laboured with me in the gospel.” He commends Phebe in Romans 16:1-2 as a servant of the church and a succourer of many. He mentions Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis as women who labored much in the Lord (Romans 16:6, 12). Those are not throwaway references. The Holy Ghost put them in the Book to show that the field of God is tended by more hands than the obvious public names alone.

This is important because some people think ministry only counts if it is loud, visible, and platform-centered. But Scripture honors labor that helps, serves, supports, refreshes, hosts, strengthens, carries burdens, and stands with the truth. Faithful women in the New Testament were not useless ornaments in the life of the church. They were workers. They were supporters. They were servants whose labor mattered to the spread and strengthening of the gospel. The church ought to recognize that without collapsing biblical order. God is perfectly capable of honoring real labor without confusing roles.

This should also help women in the body of Christ see the dignity of faithful service in their God-given sphere. The world measures influence by visibility and authority. God measures by faithfulness. A woman who supports the truth, teaches rightly where God gives her scope, strengthens saints, serves the body, helps the laborers, raises children in Scripture, opens her home, and gives herself to the work is not on the fringe of ministry. She is in the field. She is part of the many-handed tending of God’s husbandry. Heaven knows her labor even when modern platforms do not.

6. Pastors, Teachers, and Parents Labor in Different but Real Ways

The Lord “gave some, pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11), and He gave them for “the perfecting of the saints” and “the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). That means some laborers are specifically called to steady, teach, feed, guard, and mature the flock over time. A pastor is not merely a public speaker with office hours. He is a shepherd charged with caring for souls. A teacher is not merely a conveyor of information. He is a laborer opening truth so saints can understand and grow. That is watering work of the highest order. It may not always have the burst of first-contact evangelism, but it is indispensable to the health of the body.

Parents also belong in this conversation. A father is told to bring up his children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). A mother and father who plant Scripture in their children’s hearts and water those truths over years are doing some of the most consequential work in the entire field of God. The world may never applaud it. No conference may ever feature it. No ministry report may list it as a visible metric. But God sees it. Teaching a child the fear of the Lord, opening the Bible at home, correcting, encouraging, and praying over young souls is holy labor. Some of the strongest future laborers in God’s field were first planted and watered at home.

This should broaden the believer’s sight. Ministry is not a narrow category. It includes pulpits, classrooms, homes, counseling, conversations, correction, and care. A pastor may labor week after week in exposition. A teacher may labor in explanation. A parent may labor through years of sowing and watering inside the home. Not every laborer looks the same, but all of them may be tending the same field under the same Lord. The church must stop acting as if only one kind of labor counts and start honoring scriptural faithfulness wherever God has placed it.

7. Ordinary Witnesses Show That the Field Belongs to All the Saints

One of the most encouraging truths in the New Testament is that not all faithful labor is tied to prominent names. After the persecution connected to Stephen, believers were “scattered abroad” and “went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). Those were not all apostles. Those were ordinary scattered saints carrying the seed with them. The field opened wherever they landed. That means the work of God does not depend entirely on a handful of recognized figures. The ordinary believer with the Word of God in his mouth is part of the harvest labor. He may never be widely known on earth, but he can still be deeply useful in heaven’s accounting.

This guards the church from a dangerous mentality that says, “Ministry is what the official people do.” No. Ministry in one sense belongs to the whole body. Not everyone has the same office, but everyone has some stewardship. The ordinary witness who speaks to a coworker, the believer who sends a verse to a discouraged friend, the saint who explains the gospel to a family member, the Christian who quietly gives out tracts, the one who prays for laborers and supports the work, all of that belongs to the field. God has always used ordinary saints in extraordinary ways simply because they were available with the truth.

That should bring joy instead of frustration. A believer does not need to become a famous servant to become a faithful one. He does not need to imitate another man’s calling to have one. He needs to identify where God has placed him and then labor there with the truth for

the glory of God. The field is wide enough for many forms of obedience. The ordinary witness matters because the field is not managed by celebrity but by Christ. And Christ is able to use the obscure, the quiet, the unnoticed, and the humble just as truly as the public laborer.

Conclusion

Different callings, one field. That is the great lesson of this essay. Paul planted. Apollos watered. Philip ran to one man in a chariot. Timothy strengthened churches. Priscilla and Aquila quietly corrected and helped. Faithful women labored in support and service. Pastors and teachers fed the flock. Parents planted and watered truth in the home. Ordinary witnesses carried the Word wherever God scattered them. None of them did exactly the same work in exactly the same way. Yet all of them could be faithful because all of them served the same Lord in the same great field.

That means the believer must stop measuring usefulness by similarity to someone else. You do not have to be Paul to be faithful. You do not have to water exactly like Apollos, witness exactly like Philip, strengthen exactly like Timothy, or support exactly like Priscilla and Aquila. You do have to obey God where He put you. The issue is not imitation of another servant's exact shape. The issue is faithfulness in your assigned labor. God is wise enough to distribute gifts and callings without consulting human vanity.

So the right response is gratitude and obedience. Thank God that His field is tended by many hands. Thank God that He does not limit His work to one kind of servant. Thank God that under one Lord there is room for different forms of planting and different forms of watering. Then take your place. Find your labor. Stay in your lane without despising another man's lane. Rejoice in the diversity of biblical service while keeping the unity of the work in view. Because when the field is finally gathered in, the glory will not belong to the planter, the waterer, the helper, the teacher, the parent, or the witness. It will belong to the Lord who assigned them all and gave the increase.

15 of 15: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God – Until the Lord of the Harvest Comes

Main Passage: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:38)

Introduction

Every series has to end somewhere on paper, but the work it speaks about does not end until Jesus Christ says it ends. That is the burden of this final essay. We have gone through the planting, the watering, the seed, the harvest, the labourers, the patience of God, the need for prayer, the corruption of mammon, the vanity of bragging, the diversity of callings, and the truth that God gives the increase. Now all of it comes down to one final charge: stay in the field until the Lord of the harvest comes. Do not drift off. Do not get dazzled by this world. Do not get swollen with pride if God lets you see fruit. Do not get discouraged if the fruit seems hidden for a season. Do not make the work about your name, your image, your report, or your little kingdom. The field is God's. The seed is God's. The increase is God's. The glory is God's. And the time you have left belongs to Him too.

The great danger in the Christian life is not only false doctrine. It is spiritual distraction. A believer can begin in earnest and then get slowly pulled sideways into self-interest, comfort, applause, routine, cynicism, or weariness. He starts out wanting to be faithful and ends up wanting to be seen. He starts out burdened for souls and ends up managing his image. He starts out planting the Word and watering in prayer, and then some years later he is just protecting habits, maintaining appearances, and talking more than laboring. That is why the New Testament keeps bringing the saint back to the coming of Jesus Christ. The return of the Lord is not merely a prophetic chart issue. It is a purifying hope and a governing reality. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). If the Lord is coming, then the field matters. If the Lord is coming, then the labor matters. If the Lord is coming, then faithfulness matters.

This last chapter of the series is meant to gather the whole burden into one final trumpet blast. We are not on earth to build our own kingdoms, gather applause, or make names for ourselves. We are on earth to labor in God's field for God's glory while time remains. We are here to sow the Word, water with truth and prayer, trust God for the increase, and keep our eyes on the Lord of the harvest. We are here to work until He comes, wait until He comes, watch until He comes, and endure until He comes. Some fruit may appear immediately. Some fruit may not appear until the judgment seat of Christ pulls the veil back. But every faithful labor done for Jesus Christ will matter in eternity. The field belongs to Him, and the reckoning belongs to Him, and no man who labors for His glory will have done so in vain.

1. The Harvest Still Belongs to the Lord

The first thing that has to be settled at the close of this series is the same thing that had to be settled at the beginning: the harvest is not yours. Jesus did not say pray to the lord of your ministry, the lord of your platform, or the lord of your enterprise. He said, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest" (Matthew 9:38). It is His harvest. That is one of the most liberating truths a laborer can learn if he will really believe it. It means the field is not under

your personal ownership. The souls are not your possession. The church is not your private company. The work is not your monument. You are a servant in someone else's field, and the Owner is the Lord Jesus Christ.

That truth cuts two ways at once. First, it destroys pride. A man cannot strut in a field that does not belong to him without looking like a fool. He cannot take ultimate credit for fruit in a harvest he did not design, purchase, or quicken. He cannot build a throne out in the rows and act as if all heaven should admire him for doing assigned labor on borrowed time. Second, it destroys despair. If the harvest belonged to you, then every bad season, every hard patch of ground, every slow response, and every visible lack would crush you under a load you were never meant to carry. But because the harvest belongs to the Lord, the laborer can work hard without imagining that providence rises and falls on his shoulders.

That is why the believer must keep coming back to this truth. The field belongs to Christ. The time belongs to Christ. The final accounting belongs to Christ. You are not here to become the owner. You are here to be faithful as a servant. That keeps the soul steady. It keeps him from overvaluing applause and from collapsing under pressure. When he remembers whose field it is, he becomes both humbler and calmer. He can work like a man under authority because that is exactly what he is.

2. We Are Not Here to Build Our Own Kingdoms

One of the great spiritual diseases of the last days is kingdom-building in the wrong direction. Men use the name of Jesus Christ while building their own little domains. They gather followings around themselves, protect their brand, measure everything by visible reach, and subtly act as though the body of Christ were existing to fund, feed, and admire their operation. That spirit is poison. Jesus Christ never saved men so they could turn ministry into a mirror reflecting themselves. He saved men to glorify God. Paul said, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). There is the apostolic spirit, and it is almost extinct in a lot of modern religious culture.

The believer has to keep asking himself a brutal but necessary question: am I trying to build Christ's cause, or am I trying to become something in the eyes of men? Those are not the same thing. A man may speak true things and still be secretly serving his own reputation. He may labor in real work and still dream more about being admired than about Christ being magnified. That is why the cross has to remain central. The cross destroys self-glory. It tells the servant that he was bought with blood, saved by grace, and left here as a steward, not as an emperor. The servant who forgets that will start measuring everything by whether it enlarges his name.

That is one reason the coming of Christ is so helpful to the soul. It reminds the believer that all false kingdoms are temporary. Every vanity operation will be burned through one day. Every self-exalting ministry will stand before the One whose eyes are as a flame of fire. Every hidden motive will be weighed. Every wooden tower built to magnify self under a layer of religious vocabulary will be tested. So the wise servant decides now that he is not here to build something for his own applause. He is here to be faithful in another Man's work.

3. Keep Sowing the Word While Time Remains

As this series closes, the call to keep sowing the Word must sound out clearly. The church is not called to become impressive. It is called to become faithful. The sower still has his seed bag in hand, and the seed is still "the word of God" (Luke 8:11). That means the work remains what it has always been. Preach the gospel. Teach the truth. Hand out the Scriptures. Speak Christ to the lost. Put divine truth where darkness ruled before. Plant the incorruptible seed where there was nothing but lies, confusion, sin, and spiritual death. As long as the Lord has left the church here, He has left her with seed to sow.

This is especially important in a time when men are tempted to replace the seed with substitutes. The modern church loves packaging, but the crop still comes from seed. It loves image, but the field still requires the Word. It loves emotional atmosphere, but faith still "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). So the final charge of the series must be a charge back to the Book. Keep sowing it. Sow it publicly. Sow it privately. Sow it in homes, pulpits, classrooms, sidewalks, conversations, and letters. Sow it when men receive it gladly. Sow it when they roll their eyes. Sow it because it is the appointed means of life and truth in the field of God.

And do it while time remains. Paul said, "the night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Romans 13:12). That does not mean the church should panic. It means she should not be asleep. If the day is at hand, then the field should look more urgent, not less. The lateness of the hour is no excuse for passivity. It is an argument for urgency. The Christian who believes the Lord is coming soon ought not speak less truth but more. He ought not plant less, but more faithfully. The field still stands open, and the seed still matters.

4. Keep Watering with Truth and Prayer

Not every faithful servant is a first-contact planter in the same way, but all who are called to strengthen, teach, exhort, correct, and pray must keep watering. Apollos watered. Timothy strengthened. Pastors feed the flock. Parents remind and reinforce. Mature saints establish weaker saints. That labor must continue until Jesus Christ returns. The church is not called merely to start things. It is called to sustain things under God. It is not enough to have one exciting moment if there is no follow-up truth. It is not enough to see a beginning if there is

no nourishment afterward. Watering remains necessary as long as there are saints on earth who need stability, depth, correction, and encouragement.

That watering must be done with both truth and prayer. Truth without prayer becomes mechanical and proud. Prayer without truth becomes vague and unstable. The waterer must keep bringing the Word to bear and keep asking the Lord to make that Word live. Paul said of Christ's servants, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). There is the pattern. Not prayer alone. Not word alone. Prayer and the Word, together, in sustained ministry. That is still how the saints are strengthened. Truth teaches the mind. Prayer leans on heaven. Together they water the field under God.

So the laborer must not despise the slower work. Keep teaching. Keep correcting. Keep reminding. Keep exhorting. Keep praying over those you are trying to help. Keep watering children, converts, churches, and weary saints with the Book of God and the prayers of faith. The flesh wants visible speed, but God often works through repeated nourishment. What looks ordinary to men may be one of the very means the Lord is using to preserve fruit until the day of Christ.

5. Keep Trusting God for the Increase

At the center of the entire series is a truth that has to remain at the center of the final essay: "God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). If a believer loses that truth, he will either become arrogant or crushed, depending on the season. If fruit appears, he will start thinking too much of himself. If fruit delays, he will start thinking too little of the God who called him. But when he remembers that increase belongs to God, he can work hard without pretending to be the source. He can hope without becoming proud. He can endure without becoming despairing. He can plant and water while leaving the miracle where it belongs - in the hands of God.

That trust is not passive. It does not say, "God gives increase, therefore I will do nothing." It says, "God gives increase, therefore I can labor with hope." A farmer who believes there is no possibility of harvest will not stay in the field long. But a believer who knows God gives increase can remain at the task even when visible evidence is sparse. He knows that hidden roots may be developing. He knows that convictions may be working under the surface. He knows that due season belongs to God. And because he knows that, he is not driven by frantic self-importance. He is steadied by divine sovereignty.

This is one reason humility and hope belong together in the Christian laborer. He is humble because he knows the increase is not from him. He is hopeful because he knows the increase is from God. Those two truths produce a sane servant. He neither struts nor sulks. He neither plays God nor gives up the field. He keeps trusting the Lord to do what only the

Lord can do. And that trust becomes one of the strongest sources of endurance in all the work.

6. Keep Giving God the Glory in Every Season

If the increase belongs to God, then the glory belongs to God too. That means the laborer must train his heart to give God the glory whether the season is visibly fruitful or painfully slow. It is easier to say that than to live it. When fruit appears, the temptation is to start stealing a little credit inwardly. When fruit delays, the temptation is to become moody, doubtful, or envious of others. But the servant who has learned the series lesson rightly keeps his eye on the same truth in both cases: God is worthy of the glory no matter what the field looks like this week.

Paul said, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). That is not a nice afterthought. It is a command that protects the soul. If someone comes to Christ under your witness, glory in the Lord. If a saint is strengthened through your teaching, glory in the Lord. If a child begins to show fruit after years of quiet Scripture at home, glory in the Lord. If your labor seems hidden and fruit is not yet visible, still glory in the Lord, because obedience itself is part of His due honor. The church was never meant to become a stage where servants are crowned for being used. It was meant to be a place where Christ is magnified for using them at all.

That habit of glorifying God in every season keeps the soul clean. It protects him from vanity in visible success and bitterness in hidden labor. It reminds him that the real center of ministry is not the servant’s emotional weather but the worthiness of God. A man who learns to give God the glory before the fruit is seen is often the same man who will not steal the glory once the fruit appears. That is a holy way to finish the series and a holy way to finish one’s course.

7. Every Faithful Labor Will Matter at the Judgment Seat of Christ

One final truth must close the whole series, and it is this: no faithful labor done for Jesus Christ is wasted. Some of it will be seen now. Some of it will not be seen until later. Some may not be fully seen until eternity opens the books. But it will matter. Paul says, “every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1 Corinthians 3:8). He says again that “every man’s work shall be made manifest” and “the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Corinthians 3:13). That is not a threat to the faithful servant. It is a comfort. It means the hidden labor is not hidden forever. The praying, the teaching, the waiting, the sowing, the watering, the quiet obedience, the uncelebrated steadfastness - all of it will be weighed by the Lord who misses nothing.

This should strengthen every weary laborer who has sometimes wondered whether his work mattered. Did the tract handed out matter? Did the Bible opened at the table matter? Did the tearful prayer over a child matter? Did the repeated doctrine taught to a struggling saint matter? Did the hard conversation where truth was spoken in love matter? Yes. It mattered. Maybe not in a way the flesh can immediately measure, but it mattered because it was done unto the Lord in His field. The judgment seat of Christ will pull back the curtain on a great many quiet obediences that never made a report impressive on earth but were precious in heaven.

So the believer should live and labor with that day in view. He is not waiting for men to understand everything. He is not laboring for immediate applause. He is not deciding whether the work matters based on whether he gets visible confirmation this month. He is going to stand before Jesus Christ. That thought sobers him, purifies him, and strengthens him. It tells him that faithfulness counts even when flash does not. It tells him that the Lord's evaluation is the final one. And it tells him that if he labors for Christ's glory, eternity will not forget it.

Conclusion

This final essay gathers the whole series into one charge: stay in the field until the Lord of the harvest comes. We are not here to build our own kingdoms, gather applause, or make names for ourselves. We are here to labor in God's field for God's glory while time remains. The seed is still the Word of God. The watering is still truth and prayer. The increase is still from God alone. The labor is still holy. The souls are still precious. The church is still under orders. And the Lord Jesus Christ is still coming back.

That means hope, humility, endurance, and urgency all belong together. Hope, because the Lord has not forgotten His field. Humility, because we are only servants in it. Endurance, because due season belongs to Him and not to our impatience. Urgency, because the hour is late and every day of mercy is another day to plant and water the truth. Whether fruit is seen quickly or hidden until the judgment seat, the believer is called to stay faithful. He is not judged by whether he can manufacture life, but by whether he has obeyed the Lord in the labor assigned.

So let the last word of the series be this: keep sowing the Word. Keep watering with truth and prayer. Keep trusting God for the increase. Keep giving Him the glory. Keep your hand to the plow and your eye on the sky. Because the harvest belongs to the Lord, the field belongs to the Lord, the reward belongs to the Lord, and every faithful labor done for Him will matter forever when the Lord of the harvest finally comes.

Conclusion to the Series: Watering and Planting for the Glory of God

Now that you have come to the end of this series, the great truth standing over everything you have read is this: the work of God is real, but the glory of God must remain central in it. You have seen that planting is not a vague religious phrase, but the sowing of the Word of God into the hearts and minds of men. You have seen that watering is not an afterthought, but the continued nourishing of truth through teaching, exhortation, correction, encouragement, prayer, and patient discipleship. You have seen that these two labors are different, but not divided. They belong together. They work together. They serve the same Lord in the same field. You have also seen that while both are necessary, neither one can create life. Neither the planter nor the waterer can produce conviction, repentance, regeneration, or lasting fruit. God alone gives the increase. That truth is the anchor of the entire series, and if it has settled into your heart, then this study has already done one of the best things it could do: it has lowered man and lifted God.

You have also learned something else that is desperately needed in this generation. You have learned that ministry can be corrupted from more than one direction. It can be corrupted by mammon, by celebrity, by prosperity preaching, by image-building, by fleshly methods, by emotional manipulation, and by the arrogance of acting as though man can decree and command what only God can bring to pass. But it can also be corrupted by pride in more conservative-looking places, where men boast in numbers, reports, visible counts, and their own role in the work as though eternal life were something they had manufactured. This series has shown you both ditches so that you do not fall into either one. It has shown you that the true servant of God must work hard without worshiping his work, must care deeply about souls without turning them into trophies, must preach boldly without pretending to be God, and must stay humble whether fruit is visible now or only revealed later. That kind of balance is rare, and that is one reason this series is beneficial. It does not merely tell you to labor. It teaches you how to labor with the right spirit, the right doctrine, and the right goal.

So where do you go from here? You go back into the field with clearer eyes. You go back into your calling with a steadier heart. You do not finish this series merely saying, "That was interesting." You finish it asking, "What has God called me to do in His field?" Maybe your role is more planting. Maybe your role is more watering. Maybe your labor is public. Maybe it is quiet. Maybe it is in the pulpit. Maybe it is in your home. Maybe it is through prayer, discipleship, witness, teaching, encouragement, correction, support, or faithful endurance in a place nobody notices but God. But wherever the Lord has placed you, go there with this truth burned into your mind: the field belongs to Him, the seed belongs to Him, the harvest belongs to Him, the increase belongs to Him, and the glory belongs to Him. So keep sowing

the Word, keep watering with truth and prayer, keep trusting God for what only He can do, and keep your eye on the coming of Jesus Christ. Because every faithful labor done for His glory will matter in eternity, and one day the Lord of the harvest will settle the whole account perfectly.

VERSEQUEST
MINISTRIES

WATERING AND PLANTING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. — 1 Corinthians 3:6

1 CORE TEXT

1 CORINTHIANS 3:6–9 (KJV)



"I have planted"
— v. 6



"Apollos watered"
— v. 6



"God gave the increase"
— v. 6



"We are labourers together with God"
— v. 9

★ **BRIEF TAKEAWAY:** Men labour — God gives life, growth, and fruit.

2 WHAT IS PLANTING?

Sowing the seed of the Word	Luke 8:11 "The seed is the word of God."
Gospel preaching	Romans 10:17 "Faith cometh by hearing"
Personal witness	Acts 8:35 "preached unto him Jesus"
Scripture teaching/distribution	1 Peter 1:23 "incorruptible... word of God"

🌱 **SUMMARY:** Planting is the first bringing of God's truth to the soul.

3 WHAT IS WATERING?

Teaching and doctrine	Acts 2:42 "continued stedfastly"
Exhortation and correction	2 Timothy 4:2 "reprove, rebuke, exhort"
Discipleship and strengthening	1 Thessalonians 3:2 "establish you"
Prayerful support	Colossians 1:9 "do not cease to pray"

💧 **SUMMARY:** Watering nourishes truth already planted.

4 GOD GIVES THE INCREASE

Only God opens hearts	Acts 16:14 "whose heart the Lord opened"
Only God gives repentance	2 Timothy 2:25 "if God peradventure will give them repentance"
Only God gives the new birth	James 1:18 "begat he us with the word of truth"
Only God gives lasting fruit	John 15:5 "without me ye can do nothing"

🌿 **SUMMARY:** The labour is ours — the miracle is His.

5 DIFFERENT LABOURERS, ONE FIELD

 Paul planter 1 Corinthians 3:6	 Apollos waterer 1 Corinthians 3:6	 Philip witness to one soul Acts 8:35	 Timothy establisher/strengthener 1 Thessalonians 3:2	 Priscilla & Aquila explained more perfectly Acts 18:26	 Parents / pastors / teachers / faithful saints Ephesians 4:11–12; Ephesians 6:4
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★ **SUMMARY:** Different callings — one Lord, one field, one purpose.

6 THE HARVEST BURDEN

 Matthew 9:37–38 "The harvest truly is plenteous" / "Pray ye therefore"	 1 Timothy 2:4 "Who will have all men to be saved"	 2 Peter 3:9 "not willing that any should perish"	 Galatians 6:9 "Be not weary in well doing"
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🌿 **SUMMARY:** This age of grace is harvest time — labour while it is day.

7 WARNINGS / FALSE DITCHES

FALSE DITCH #1 — MAMMON

- Success measured by money and luxury
- Church turned into a business model
- Matthew 6:24
"Ye cannot serve God and mammon"



FALSE DITCH #2 — PRIDE & NUMBERS

- Bragging in reports and statistics
- Acting as if man gives the increase
- 1 Corinthians 3:7
"neither is he that planteth any thing"

⚠️ **Both ditches steal glory from God.**

8 WHAT THE BELIEVER SHOULD DO

Sow the Word faithfully	1 Corinthians 15:58 "your labour is not in vain in the Lord"
Water with truth and prayer	1 Corinthians 15:58
Pray for labourers	Matthew 9:38 "Pray ye therefore"
Endure without fainting	Galatians 6:9 "Be not weary in well doing"
Refuse mammon and pride	Matthew 6:24
Give God all the glory	1 Corinthians 3:6–7

9 OUR PART: PLANT • WATER • PRAY • ENDURE

GOD'S PART: OPEN HEARTS • GIVE REPENTANCE • GIVE LIFE • GIVE INCREASE

🌿 *Stay in the field until the Lord of the harvest comes.* 🌿